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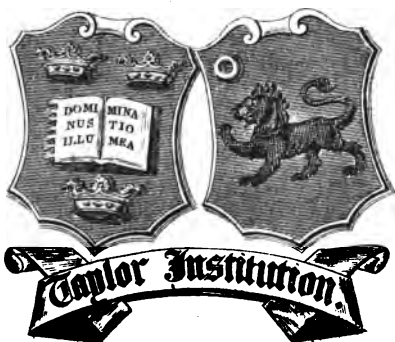
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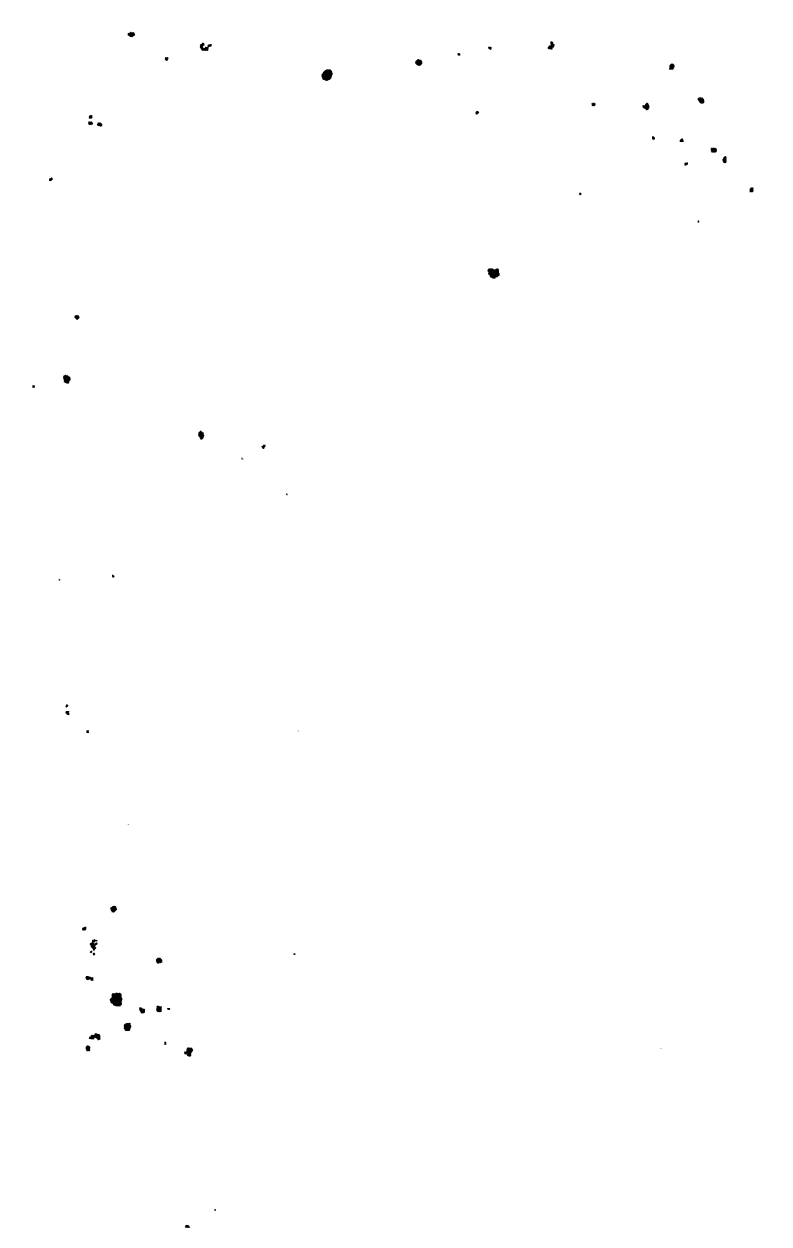


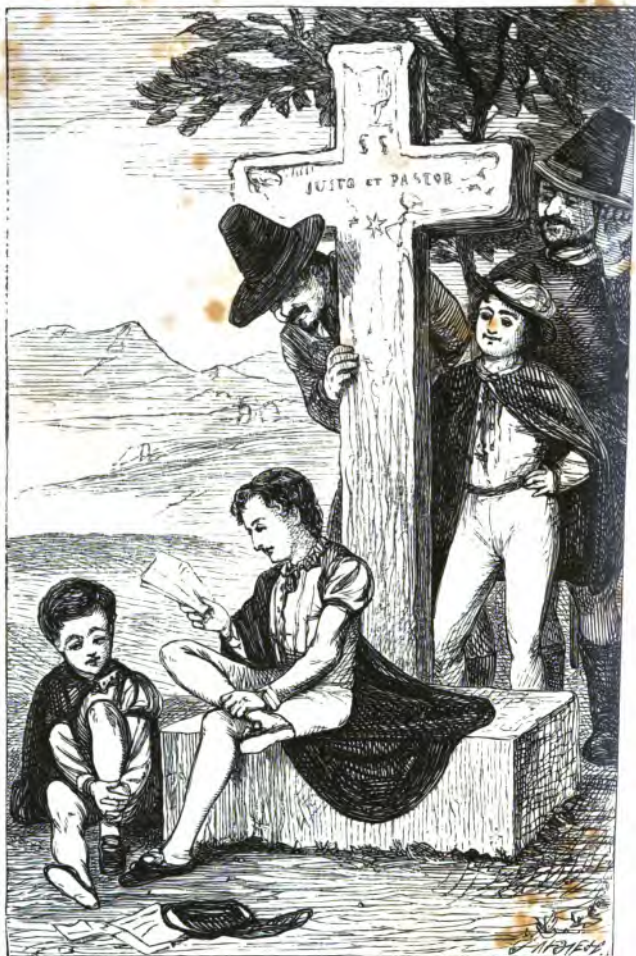
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Cervantes reading his first Romance.

THE
STORY OF CERVANTES;

WHO WAS

A SCHOLAR, A POET, A SOLDIER, A SLAVE AMONG THE MOORS,
AND THE AUTHOR OF "DON QUIXOTE."

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF "MY BROTHER'S WIFE," "THE LADDER OF LIFE," ETC.

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
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1863.



TO
MY FRIEND AND COUSIN,
M. BETHAM-EDWARDS:

WHOSE ADMIRABLE VOLUMES FOR THE YOUNG
DELIGHT READERS OF ALL AGES,
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

A. B. E.

IN SIXPENNY NUMBERS.

Every Boy's Magazine,

AN

Illustrated Monthly Periodical,

CONTAINING

CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE MOST POPULAR
AUTHORS OF THE DAY.

*Each Number comprises Sixty-four well-printed Pages
and Twelve Illustrations.*

PREFACE.

TRAVELLING home from Rome, some years ago, we chanced to pass the Easter Sunday in a certain town of the Italian Tyrol. Long before church-time, every road and mountain-path in the neighbourhood swarmed with peasantry, old and young, on foot and on horseback ; and, as midday approached, not only the church but the church-yard, and a good acre or two of meadow slope beyond, were densely crowded. At twelve, the bells ceased ringing, and a profound silence fell upon the congregation. This silence was presently interrupted by a prolonged flourish of trumpets. The flourish of trumpets was followed by a popular overture of Rossini's, very creditably performed by a provincial band. Then came another flourish of trumpets ; then marched in eighteen gorgeous beadles, two and two, with cocked hats and halberts, and crimson silk shoulder-scarves, embroidered with gold ; and then a very little boy in a soiled surplice, several inches too long for him, who looked terribly frightened, and

lit the candles ! We had expected to see a bishop at the very least.

The word PREFACE, at the top of this page, put us in mind, somehow, of that Easter Sunday. Our story of Cervantes is a volume of slender bulk and few pretensions. The little which we have to say about it may be told in a few words—might, perhaps, be left altogether unsaid, without loss to the reader—and scarcely deserves mention in this place at all. In short, we have serious misgivings lest our Preface may come to be regarded as a wasteful and ridiculous expenditure of trumpets and beatles, with a mere small boy to follow.

Briefly, then, truth of historical fact and truth of local colour are the only merits to which this little story lays claim. For the former we have chiefly relied on Mr. Roscoe's "Life of Cervantes," a work which may justly be regarded as an authentic epitome of all hitherto ascertained information upon the subject. That the bulk of this information should not, after all, be more copious is matter for regret ; but the lives of great poets have, for the most part, come down to us in fragments ; and these fragments, of which Miguel Cervantes is the hero, are doubtless more than usually ample and satisfactory. He lived in stirring times ; he took part

in stirring deeds ; he fought his way to fame, sword in hand, and was known to his contemporaries for his valour, his virtues, and his misfortunes, long years before his plays filled the theatres of Madrid, or his "Don Quixote" charmed the melancholy of Philip of Spain. Hence we find record of him in many directions ; read his praise in military despatches ; are enabled to follow him in his campaigns ; hear of him in Algiers, through the memoirs of his fellow captives ; and trace the slow progress of his release and after career by means of all kinds of mouldering petitions, official letters, and half-forgotten parchments, which have from time to time been sought out and deciphered by successive generations of biographers. We should deem ourselves rich in precious knowledge if we possessed but half as many particulars of the life of our own Shakespeare. Of these details, then, dry and somewhat monotonous as they frequently are, we have availed ourselves as fully as the limits of this little tale would permit. We have taken them for the basis of every important incident, adhered to them conscientiously throughout, and, however we may have ventured to embellish them by the aid of fiction, have in no case distorted or falsified them to suit the purposes of the story.

With regard to the question of local colouring, we have endeavoured to render it with the utmost relative truth that care and industry could insure. For instance, the mystery described in Chapter IX. will be found in Hone's valuable little book on "Ancient Mysteries and Miracle Plays;" the account of Lope de Rueda's company, performances, and theatrical properties in Chapter VI., may be verified from the pages of Bouterwek and Schlegel; while the chapters relating to the Roman carnival and the martyrdom of Richard Atkins, depend for their historical fidelity on a very curious tract, written by an Englishman, who visited Italy during the latter half of the sixteenth century, which tract has been of late years reprinted in the Harleian Miscellanies. These, however, are but a few instances selected from many, and are quoted in no ostentation of research, but merely as evidence of the truthfulness of spirit in which the author has endeavoured to carry out her design. For the rest, let the book be its own testimony, as all books must be, sooner or later, whether to their reward or condemnation.

AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

Bonn, *Sept.*, 1862.

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THE STORY OF CERVANTES.

CHAPTER I.

Our hero is born and christened.

THERE were rejoicings in the house of Senor Rodrigo Cervantes de Saavedra.

It was on the 9th of October, Anno Domini 1547, just three hundred and fifteen years ago, and Senor Rodrigo de Cervantes and his family rejoiced on the birth of a second son. Boys are often more warmly welcomed into the world than girls, especially in Spain; and Senor Rodrigo, whose pedigree was long, but whose purse was short, rejoiced all the more because he was already the father of two daughters and only one elder boy.

"As for girls," said the good hidalgo, "one must make wives or nuns of them, and neither the husbands nor the convents will take them without a dowry; but boys are made for the world, and the world for them. Give them a little schooling and a

good deal of the rod, and they are sure to fight their way somehow."

So he called for a stoop of wine, and gave the nurse a rial for her good news, and put on his best cloak and his hat with the red feather, which he only wore on Sundays and festivals, and went out to invite his friends to the christening-supper. First of all he called on the priest, and made arrangements for the ceremony. Then he went to the house of his rich, miserly cousin, Miguel de Correa, and invited him to be godfather.

"I shall be expected to give the baby a silver cup," thought the rich cousin to himself, and hesitated.

"We shall call him by your name, dear cousin Miguel," said the father, persuasively.

"Perhaps a plated one will do," thought the miser; and consented.

Then Senor Rodrigo went round by the Plaza de Toros, and called on his old maiden aunt, Donna Juanna; and then on his married nephew, Doctor Gil Perez, who was a physician, and lived in the market-place; and then on his old friend Garcia, the notary-public; and then on some ten or a dozen more cousins of both sexes: and they all promised to come, if not in time for church, at least in time for supper.

Ah me! what a busy day it was in the household

of Senor Rodrigo ! The children were locked up in the nursery. The housemaid polished the furniture and dusted the family pictures. The kitchen chimney smoked like a furnace. The cook toiled all day over her stewpans and her pasties ; and every shop in Alcala de Henares (which, by the way, was the name of the town where these events took place) was ransacked for spices and preserves, and delicacies of every description. At length, towards five or six o'clock in the evening, the friends assembled ; and Senor Rodrigo gave his arm to his maiden aunt, and the rich cousin walked beside the nurse, who carried the baby ; and they all went to the Church of Saint Mary the Greater, where the little Miguel was duly christened, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic faith ; and objected to those rites as lustily as most little Christians do on similar occasions. After this, they went back to supper, priest and all, and sat down to such a feast as I will not venture to describe. For how could I hope, at this distance of time, to do justice to the flavour of the stewed quails, the pigeons stuffed with olives, the roasted venison, the preserved quinces, the larded pheasants, the savoury ollas, the veal with tomatas, the pomegranate salads, the green figs, the golden melons, the purple grapes, the skins of rich red Valdepenas wine, and

amber sherry? Enough that everybody enjoyed everything, drank the health of Senor Rodrigo and his wife Donna Leonora, and pronounced the little Miguel to be the most beautiful baby that ever was seen.— Though, to be sure, he was very small, very red, very cross, and only one day old.

CHAPTER II.

The great mystery of the paper.

THE little university-town of Alcala de Henares lies about twenty miles to the eastward of Madrid. All around it stretch barren wastes, and in the farthest distance may be seen long chains of sultry mountains. The house of Senor Rodrigo stood on the outskirts of the town. It was built of cream-coloured stone, and approached by a paved yard, with the family-arms carved over the gateway. In this yard, on the sunny side of the wall, there used to hang long festoons of grapes and herbs to dry for winter use ; and under the porch there generally stood six or eight red earthen jars of wine. Within, there were a great many rooms somewhat scantily furnished, including a parlour, the walls of which were covered with grim old family portraits, and a library hung with tapestries of painted serge, representing the siege of Troy. The windows at the back looked over a dreary little river half choked with stones, and skirted by a few tawny meadows ; while from the front might be seen the town-walls, the spires of the churches, the steep roofs

of the old houses, and the towers of the university. The university of Alcala de Henares was then a flourishing institution, crowded with students from all parts of Spain, and famous for its learning ; but now only the empty halls and corridors remain. The college is removed to Madrid, and the spirit of learning is gone with it.

Such, then, was the home, and such the neighbourhood, in which our little Miguel Cervantes was born and bred.

Time went on. The good hidalgo had no more children, and Miguel became both the pet and the torment of his elder brother Rodrigo, and his two sisters, Andrea and Louisa. A strange boy was he, beyond doubt—a boy both playful and thoughtful, mischievous and serious, gentle at times, ungovernable at times, and precocious beyond his years. If the curé's orchard was robbed of its summer apples—if the servants were frightened to death by a ghost in white robes peeping in at the pantry window—if the bust of Homer in the hall was found to be painted in red and blue stripes like an Indian warrior, Miguel was sure to be at the bottom of the matter. Sometimes he had fits of study, when he could scarcely be induced to lay his books aside even during meals. Sometimes he had fits of idleness, when neither his

father nor his teachers could do anything with him—when he would escape to the fields and wander away for hours, no one knew whither; and come back at dusk with his clothes all torn by brambles, and his face hardly recognizable for dust. But one of his greatest delights was to ransack the old carved book-case behind the library-door, and curl himself up in a corner of the bay-window, with some worm-eaten folio almost as big as himself. Senor Rodrigo had been in his younger days an enthusiastic reader of chivalrous romances, and had inherited a vast number of them from his father and grandfather, all bound in old black leather with metal clasps, and now mouldy and worm-eaten enough from lying by upon his neglected bookshelves. Here were the adventures of Amadis de Gaul, the achievements of Orlando, Florismarte of Hircania, the Mirror of Chivalry, the Knight of the Cross, the Palmerin of England, the history of Tirante the White, and some two or three dozen more, all about knights and giants, and enchanted castles, and cruel magicians, and beautiful princesses with eyes like stars, and a great deal more nonsense of the same kind. Besides these, there were several volumes of plays and pastorals, and a few books of old Spanish ballads, all of which the boy devoured with a relish that was never blunted, and a patience that

'never tired. As for his parents, they asked nothing better than to find him any employment that might keep him out of mischief, and so allowed him to read to his heart's content.

By-and-by, however, he was observed to grow more thoughtful, and more unsociable than of old. Instead of curling himself up in the library window, he used now to steal away with his book to the unoccupied rooms at the top of the house or to the shade of the alder bushes by the river-side. He also showed a strange covetousness for paper. If he saw a little scrap lying in the streets, he would pick it up and put it in his pocket. The back of an old letter, a torn fly-leaf, even a crumpled morsel of paper-wrapper, became a treasure for seizure and concealment. This was very mysterious. His brother and sisters tormented him with questions. Why did he want those scraps of paper? What did he do with them? Where did he hide them? But he turned a deaf ear to their inquiries, and steadily refused to reply to one of them.

But Miguel had a friend of his own age, called Manuel, who was the son of a neighbouring hidalgo. He was a quiet, good-natured boy, and he admired and loved young Cervantes with all his honest heart. So Miguel loved him in return, and kept no secrets from him.

"If thou wilt come with me, Manuel," said he, one afternoon, "I will tell thee wherefore I prize the pieces of paper. I have them here."

And, opening the breast of his doublet, he showed a bundle of scraps tied together with a piece of red tape.

Manuel's eyes sparkled. Though he had never tormented Cervantes like the rest, he had been just as curious.

"The truth is," said Cervantes, hesitating a little, as they walked along, "I—I am writing a romance."

"A romance!" echoed Manuel.

Cervantes nodded.

"And its name?"

"The Surprising Adventures of Don Florianus, the Knight of the Marine Armour."

"What a beautiful title!" exclaimed Manuel, admiringly. "How clever thou art, Miguel!"

At which Miguel shook his head, and said, "Nonsense!" but looked pleased nevertheless. Presently they came to a stone wall, about a mile beyond the town, where there was a group of shady cork-trees, and a little cross erected to the memory of two infant saints named Justo and Pastor, who, being supposed to have suffered martyrdom at that spot about twelve hundred and fifty years before, were the patron saints

of Alcala de Henares. Having pulled off their caps, and said a Pater and Ave, the two boys sat down among the trees at the foot of the cross, and Miguel brought out his manuscript.

"Will it be printed?" asked Manuel, while his friend was sorting the pages.

"Printed!" laughed Cervantes. "Nay, who would print a romance written by a boy? No one, Manuel. It is not worth it."

"I'm sure it's worth it," said Manuel, warmly.

"How canst tell, before hearing it? Listen." And so, having disposed his very unprofessional-looking manuscript before him as best he could, Cervantes began the first chapter of his first romance.

CHAPTER III.

The surprising adventures of Don Florianus, the Knight
of the Marine Armour.

“ONCE upon a time there lived a valiant knight called Don Florianus. He was a direct male descendant of the famous Amadis de Gaul, and lived in a splendid castle on the top of a mountain in Andalusia, the walls of which were of solid ivory, the gates of massive gold, and the windows paned with plates of pure diamond. Don Florianus was the handsomest man that ever was seen, and the most accomplished knight in Christendom. He knew every language that was spoken on this side of the equator. He played upon the lute to perfection. He sang so divinely, that wherever he went the birds left off carolling upon the boughs to listen to him. In short, there were five hundred beautiful princesses all over the world who were dying for love of Don Florianus, and yet Don Florianus was not happy. He cared, indeed, for nothing but fighting, and as Spain was just then at peace with her neighbours, he had no one to fight with. This being the case, he wearied of his

lute, and his books, and even of the love-letters of the beautiful princesses ; and sat all day long in his castle hall, brightening his ruby-hilted sword, and looking at his armour. And his armour, I should tell you, was the most wonderful armour ever seen ; for it was made entirely of the shells of marine monsters (which are a kind of natural armour, as we all know), and, being beautifully joined and highly polished, gleamed with all kinds of purple, and pearly, and crimson hues, such as we see in the mussel and the crab, and the lining of the oyster-shell.

“ At length a war was proclaimed with Barbary, and Don Florianus called for his black war-horse, and rode straight to the king’s palace, where he was received with great honour.

“ ‘ Most valiant Don,’ said the king, ‘ to you and such other knights as may choose to assemble their vassals and lead them against my enemies, I promise the following rewards. For every Moor’s head that you bring back you shall receive its full weight in good Asturian cheese ; for each of its eyes, a blue turquoise ; for every hair on its head, a small pearl ; for its nose, a bottle of otto of roses ; for its mouth, a skin of Malaga wine ; for every tooth in its jaws, a Barcelona nut ; for its beard, a measure of olive oil ; and for each ear a ring of pure Mexican gold. But to

that knight who brings me the head of the Emperor of Morocco, I promise the hand of my daughter, the Princess Bellissima, with the whole province of Galicia for her dowry.'

"Then Don Florianus, kissing the ruby hilt of his sword, swore solemnly to bring back the head of the Emperor of Morocco, or perish in the attempt; but asked the king's permission to dispose of the Moors' heads, and the rewards belonging thereto, according to his own pleasure.

"To which the king replied, 'Surely, Don Florianus; but be pleased to tell me what you mean to do with them.'

"I shall gibbet the heads of your majesty's enemies on the gates of every town throughout Spain,' replied the Don; 'and I shall, with your majesty's permission, give the wine and cheese to my soldiers; the turquoises and the gold rings to the five hundred beautiful princesses whose hearts will be broken for love of me when I wed the incomparable Bellissima; the oil I will present to our holy churches and convents, for the lighting up of their altars on my wedding-day, and the frying of fish on Fridays and Fast-days; the pearls I will bestow on all unmarried maidens between fifteen and twenty, to adorn their bridal garments; the otto of roses shall be poured into the great foun-

tain in the market-place of Madrid, for the delight of the people on your majesty's birthday ; and the nuts I will fling to the little boys and girls along the roads, wherever I journey.'

" Having thus replied, Don Florianus made a profound obeisance, and——"

Here a loud peal of laughter interrupted the young author, and, starting to his feet, he saw a group of three persons standing close behind him, in the shade of the cork-trees. One was a boy somewhat taller than himself, with a student's gown thrown over his velvet doublet ; the other two were servants in rich liveries ; and a few paces farther back, nibbling the grass by the wayside, stood a pony with scarlet housings.

" Who are you, and what business have you to listen at other people's elbows ?" stammered Cervantes, flushed with anger and confusion.

" Oh ! I beg your high mightiness's pardon," sneered the boy in the student's gown, taking off his cap with an air of mock humility. " Your highness is an author. May I inquire your excellency's name ?"

" You are an insolent spy !" shouted Cervantes.

In an instant the student's face had turned white, even to the lips, and his riding-whip had flashed across Cervantes' cheek, leaving a red scar. Cer-

vantes rushed at him, but the servants forced him back.

"Mount, my lord Count!" they cried. "It becomes you not to enter thus upon a broil in the high road! Mount, mount, we beseech you!"

"Coward!" gasped Miguel, scarce able to articulate for passion; "how dare you strike a gentleman of Spain? Stay and fight me, if you have the blood of a true race in your veins!"

But the Count only sprang into his saddle, laughed aloud (still looking very white), and rode off at a hand-gallop down the road. When he was at a safe distance, the servants released their prisoner, and followed him.

"Cowards! cowards! cowards!" cried Cervantes, panting and shaking his fists at the retreating figures.

"I know him," said Manuel. "He is the young Count of Guadalajara. He is a day student at the University."

"The Count of Guadalajara," repeated Cervantes, moodily.

Then his face flushed again—his lip quivered—he turned his head aside, and burst into tears.

"Oh, Manuel," he said, brokenly, "the blow!"

"Does thy cheek pain thee?" asked Manuel.

"Pain! Think'st thou I care for the pain?" cried

Miguel, dashing the tears away, and lifting his head like a young lion. "'Tis the shame of it, Manuel! the shame of it!"

Then pausing for a moment, he added, in an undertone:—

"But he shall either fight or ask my pardon, before he is many days older!"

"How will you make him fight?" asked Manuel.

To which Miguel only replied—"You will see."

And the romance?

Alas! the poor romance had been sadly kicked about in the struggle, and some of the most remarkable adventures of Don Florianus were lost for ever!

CHAPTER IV.

The encounter.

THE boy, Miguel Cervantes, was at least a true Spaniard of the old heroic stock. The remembrance of that blow rankled in his fiery Castilian blood, and the scar of it burned on his brain long after it had faded from his cheek. Proud, brave, and naturally hot-tempered as he was, his pride and his temper were both exasperated to fever heat. He went home with such a pain at his heart as he had never known before. It was so hard to bear this load of anger and wounded pride all silently—to go to bed with it—to rise up with it—to carry it about from night till morning, and from morning again till night, and seek no sympathy! For all this, he felt that he could not endure to tell it, even to his mother. What! tell that he had received a blow? His cheek glowed at the thought. He would die first.

Now, in all this there was, no doubt, a vast deal of romance, and no small proportion of nonsense; but it was a noble kind of folly, after all. Here were the elements of that indomitable spirit that built up the

mediæval glories of Spain ; that expelled the Moors, foot by foot, from the soil of Granada ; and conquered the New World ; and covered the western seas with ships of trade and war. Our young Cervantes had, perhaps, an exaggerated notion of honour ; but that reverence for true honour, and that pride of true courage without which no man ever yet deserved the name of gentleman, were rooted deeply in his heart, by-and-by to flourish and bear fruit.

The Count should fight, or ask his pardon,—Cervantes had said it, and Cervantes was determined that it should be so. He knew that either must be impossible, so long as the Count's two servants were at his heels ; but Manuel remembered to have seen him sometimes accompanied by only one man, and sometimes quite unattended, so Cervantes made up his mind to await a favourable opportunity.

In the meantime his romantic imagination was all on fire. He had read, and dreamed, and written chivalry till he longed to achieve some startling deed of arms ; and now that he had a real wrong to redress, he could not be satisfied unless he avenged himself with actual weapons of war. So he stole up to a lumber-closet at the top of the house, and there, amidst piles of old furniture, armour, record-chests, and rubbish of all kinds, searched out two rusty rapiers, almost as

long as himself. These he concealed in a shed at the end of the garden, and with them stowed away a good stout cudgel of about two feet and a half in length. These preparations completed, he desired Manuel to meet him every morning at the cross-roads, and there, hidden among the cork-trees, with his weapons under his arm, he waited day after day, till the Count rode by on his way to the University. For the first three mornings he came attended by his two servants ; on the fourth morning he came with only one ; on the fifth with two ; and on the sixth with one again. Miguel grew impatient. It made his blood boil to see the boy, day after day, unpunished and unconscious as ever. Once, the servants pointed to the spot, and laughed together heartily as they rode past ; and Miguel wished he were a man that he might teach them how to laugh at him in future ! "

The seventh day was Sunday, so he had to go to mass, and wait a whole day longer.

On the eighth morning he was at the cross-roads again, with his faithful little friend beside him, when they saw the Count riding slowly towards them, a long way up the road. For the first time, he was alone ! Cervantes uttered a cry of triumph. The Count came jogging leisurely on, reading as he rode—for there was an examination that day at the Uni-

versity—and never looked up till he found a hand upon his bridle, and Cervantes standing before him in the road.

“Halt there!” The Count dropped his book, and uttered a faint cry of terror.

“Who are you?” stammered he. “What do you want?”

“You struck me the other day,” said Cervantes. “Now dismount and fight me, or ask my pardon.”

“Fight you—ask your pardon?” faltered the other, looking round for help. “I don’t know you! I——”

“You do know me,” retorted Cervantes. “Are you a liar as well as a spy? Come let it be yes or no. Will you fight?”

The Count flushed and turned pale, and flushed again. His pride and his cowardice had a hard struggle, and he trembled from head to foot.

“I can’t fight,” said he, looking askance at the rapiers. “I have not learned to fence.”

“Neither have I,” replied Cervantes; “so we fight fairly.”

“Let go my rein, then,” said the Count, his teeth chattering as he spoke. “I will fight you as well as I can.”

Cervantes let go, and the Count instantly struck his spurs into his pony and dashed off towards the

town. But our Miguel could run as fast as most boys or ponies either, and anger seemed to lend him wings. He dropped the rapiers, snatched up his cudgel, and sped along like an arrow, with Manuel after him. In another minute he was up with the fugitive, had caught the rein again, dragged the pony almost on his haunches, and dealt the Count a smart cut across the shoulders.

What was his amazement to see him reel over at the first blow, slip from his saddle, and lie motionless in the dust !

Manuel came up, pale with terror.

“ Oh, Miguel ! thou hast killed him ! ”

“ Impossible ! ”

“ No, no ! See how pale he is ! Save thyself, my poor Miguel, while there is yet time.”

Miguel hesitated ; Manuel implored ; a muleteer made his appearance at a turn of the road about a quarter of a mile away ; the Count still lay rigid and breathless.

Manuel began to cry. “ They will imprison us both, Miguel, if they find us here ; and they will hang thee ! ” whimpered he.

“ Will they ? ” said Cervantes ; “ not if I can help it ! God bless thee, Manuel. Farewell ! ”

So the boys grasped each other's hands for a

moment, and fled in different directions—Manuel by a circuitous route, back to the town and to his father's house ; Cervantes across a saffron-field, and out towards the open country.

On he went for a long way, still running, till his breath failed him, and he was forced to pause for a minute. Then he looked round, found himself still unpursued, and made for a belt of dark trees lying to the right of a small village, the roofs of which peeped above the ridge of a low hill, about half a mile away. Having skirted this plantation and avoided the village, he came to four cross-roads, with a direction-post in the midst. On the four sides of this post were painted **SEGOVIA — ALCALA DE HENARES — GUADALAJARA — MADRID.** Cervantes chose Segovia, and followed the highroad for two or three more miles, meeting only a few carters and goatherds on the way ; till by-and-by, being very hot and weary, he turned aside into some meadows that bordered a brook, and lay down under a chestnut-tree to rest ; and there the loneliness of his position came upon him all at once, and he thought of his father, and his mother, and of all the grief there would be that night in his dear home ; and then he wondered if the Count was still lying in the road—if he were really dead—if he, too, had a mother who would break her heart to lose him ; and then—and

then, quite broken down by remorse and fatigue, the boy covered his face with his hands, and lay in the long grass, and sobbed till he fell asleep.

He would not have been quite so unhappy if he could only have known that as soon as he and Manuel were out of sight, the Count jumped up, mounted his pony, and galloped off to the University, as much alive as he had ever been since he came into the world.*

CHAPTER V.

Cervantes falls in with the strolling players.

ROUSED by a confused hum of many voices, Cervantes woke from his heavy sleep of sorrow, and opened his eyes upon a scene so strange and unexpected that he thought he must still be dreaming.

Assembled in this remote and solitary meadow, which when he entered it was as silent as an oasis in the desert, he beheld a company of some twenty persons of both sexes. They were, for the most part, shabbily and somewhat fantastically dressed, and occupied in various ways. Some were gathered about a fire of blazing sticks, over which a kettle was boiling. One grave-looking Senor was plucking a fowl, while a young man close by was cutting up endive and garlic for a salad. A little farther off, under the shade of the trees, were two youths practising fencing; and nearer the brookside, a lady walked to and fro with a sheet of paper in her hand, from which she read aloud very emphatically, though no one seemed disposed to listen to her. Others of the women were busy with

their needles, trimming and mending a heap of faded finery ; and in the background, as if to complete this singular picture, stood a cart laden with poles, planks, and rolls of rough canvas, while a couple of mules strolled about in their harness, grazing hither and thither according to their pleasure.

Seeing the boy awake and staring about him, an elderly man, who seemed to be somewhat better dressed than the rest, rose and came towards him.

"You sleep soundly, young sir," said he, courteously.

"I—I have been walking," stammered Cervantes, all bewilderment.

"Youth and exercise are doubtless nature's best opiates," replied the stranger. "Have you a long journey before you?"

"I am on my way to Segovia," said the boy, boldly.

"To Segovia? Then we are fellow-travellers, since we, also, are bound for that city. You, I suppose, young sir, are for the University?"

Cervantes blushed scarlet.

"No," he faltered ; "I—I am not going to the University."

"A visitor, then, I presume, during the festival-week."

"I did not know there was a festival," said Miguel, avoiding the question.

The stranger looked at him keenly, and paused before replying.

"I marvel that you should not have heard of it," said he, presently ; "for it will be the greatest festival that Spain hath seen during the present century. The new cathedral is to be consecrated, and divine worship transferred thither from the ancient edifice. Segovia will be thronged with strangers. There are to be bull-fights every day, and divers kinds of public amusements for the entertainment of the visitors."

"Indeed !" said Cervantes listlessly, and sighed.

"I could not have taken such news so indifferently when I was of your age," observed the stranger. "Methinks you are over young to greet pleasure with a sigh."

With all his fortitude, Cervantes could hardly keep back the tears that rushed to his eyes. He looked down, muttered something about fatigue and want of longer rest, and rose to go.

"Nay, you leave us not without partaking our wayside meal," said the stranger, laying a kindly hand

upon his sleeve. "You are weary, and it is already two hours past noon."

The boy hesitated. He was hungry, but his pride was stronger than his appetite.

"We are a company of players, as you have doubtless guessed ere this," pursued the stranger; and, as I have already told you, bound for Segovia. For our cookery I cannot say much, but for our goodwill I will vouch. If, therefore, you will give us your companionship on the journey, be assured, young gentleman, that you shall have a hearty welcome."

"I thank you, Senor——"

"Lope de Rueda, at your service," interposed the player.

"How! the famous Lope de Rueda?" cried Cervantes, eagerly.

"Would that my deserts equalled your courtesy," said Lope, doffing his hat with that grace which belongs only to kings or players. "I am but a poor gold-beater of Seville, who, for the satisfaction of a roving disposition, hath taken to the sock and buskin."

"Who is the first actor in Spain, and the first poet to boot," said the boy, enthusiastically. "Nay, Senor Lope, I have read your pastorals—I know whole scenes of them by heart!"

"Beware, young sir, or I shall seek to enrol thee among my actors," laughed the player.

"I would desire nothing better," replied Cervantes.

"Your parents, I fear, would not thank me," said Lope, with another of his observant glances. It did not escape him that the boy again blushed, and knew not how to answer.

At this moment one of the company blew a tin trumpet as the signal for dinner, and they all seated themselves in a circle on the grass. The manager placed Cervantes on his right hand; the younger actors handed round the dishes; and a pretty girl, whom they called Catarina, distributed the wine in wooden mugs, there being but one mug for every two persons. In the mean time every one talked and laughed, and ate and drank, and made merry; and Cervantes thought he had never seen such happy souls in his life.

After dinner they harnessed the mules in the cart, packed away provisions, crockery, needlework, and all else upon which they had been occupied, and, leaving the fire still smouldering in a corner of the meadow, resumed their journey.

And now Cervantes found that he had no reason to repent his acquaintance with Lope de Rueda and his company. Every one was kind to him. The women

petted him ; the men gave him a ride now and then on one of the mulcs ; the manager walked beside him, related stories of theatrical life, and told him the names and histories of all his different actors. Thus the afternoon went by in pleasant talk, and towards sunset they arrived at a small town, where they put up for the night.

CHAPTER VI.

The comedy at Buytrago, and the tragedy at Segovia.

LOPE DE RUEDA was no ordinary man. He was a native of Seville, and a gold-beater by trade. Nature, however, had made him a poet, and gifted him with a noble person, a fine voice, a keen sense of the ludicrous and the pathetic, and unusual powers of mimicry. While yet a young man, he abandoned the trade of gold-beating, and, as he would laughingly say, "took to the hammering out of verses, instead." He gave himself up to the study of books and men, and obtained before long the reputation of a fine scholar. He wrote pastorals, and recited them in public. He wrote comedies, trained a company of actors to perform them, and himself took the leading comic characters. So much genius and such originality could not fail to command the admiration they deserved. Lope de Rueda became the idol of Seville, and his fame both as an actor and author soon spread throughout the country. He was summoned to Madrid, and played before the court. After this he was invited to Cordova and Toledo; and so, finding

his prosperity and his popularity everywhere on the increase, he organized his little band into a regular travelling company, and visited all parts of Spain. Now no festival, no anniversary, no public holiday was complete without Lope de Rueda and his strolling theatre. Hence his journey to Segovia in 1588, where Cervantes fell in with him, and travelled in his train.

Profound interpreter of human nature as he was, the poet had, from the very first, guessed somewhat of the boy's secret. His fatigue, his embarrassment, his eagerness to be ever pushing forward, and his ill-concealed alarm when other travellers came up with them along the road, were all conclusive proofs that he was a fugitive. Lope de Rueda thought, of course, that he had run away from school; and, having taken a liking to the little fellow, resolved to win his confidence, and help him through his troubles, if he could.

It was no very difficult task to conquer the reserve which Cervantes at first strove to maintain. Having found a friend, the boy was only too glad to open his honest heart to him. He told all his little story, not without a rebellious tear or two, and Lope de Rueda listened with silent sympathy.

"So, friend Miguel," said he, when Cervantes had finished, "we are brother-scribes, it would seem. I,

however, aspire only to comedies—you have a genius for tragedy, and that of the practical kind. What, murder a Count? Fie on't! Was not a commoner good enough for you?"

"I had not thought you meant to mock me, Senor Rueda," said Cervantes, the proud blood mounting to his brow.

The poet laughed good-humouredly.

"Nor do I, my child," replied he. "I believe, in good truth, that your Count is as much dead as you or myself. Depend on it, he hath no worse ailment than cowardice. 'Tis a mean-spirited, beggarly hound, not worth an inch of a brave fellow's cudgel! Think no more of him. When we reach Segovia I will write to thy father, and make all straight again. In the meantime, thou art my guest—so let us be merry while we may!"

Cervantes pressed the kind hand frankly extended, but he could not be merry; for his father's anger, and his mother's anguish, were constantly before him. He thought of all they must suffer before any letter could reach them; and he made a thousand good resolutions for his future conduct, when he should be once more at home and forgiven. Then another very unpleasant recollection kept recurring to him, and that was that he had no money.

"You—you are very good, Senor Lope," he stammered, after an awkward silence. "I fear I must, indeed, be your guest till—till my father knows what has become of me, for——"

"For your purse, I suppose, is tolerably empty of ducats? Nay, blush not, young gentleman; we actors are familiar with poverty, and think no shame of it. I have known what it is to breakfast and dine upon a few handfuls of chestnuts, or a slice of melon! Just now, thanks be to the gods! our coffers are in excellent condition, and in Segovia we shall win a golden harvest. Meanwhile, as I said before, you are my guest. Our road is your road—our fare, such as it is, shall be your fare—and we, in return for your good company, will inflict our tediousness upon you. To-night, by the way, you shall see a play acted."

"A play! Do you act to-night?" cried Cervantes, hardly crediting his ears.

"Ay, at Buytrago. So we pay our travelling charges, friend Miguel, and make the evening's work defray the night's lodging."

Thus pleasantly chatting, they journeyed along, having started on their way in the early morning, before the heat came on. At every step they now drew nearer and nearer to the great Guadarama mountains, and before noon began to find the ground

gradually ascending. At mid-day they halted to dine in a little wood, beside a mountain stream, where they caught some trout, and lit their fire, and rested merrily for two or three hours. Then they again packed up their movables, and journeyed on, now climbing the mountain-road in earnest ; and arrived, late in the afternoon, at Buytrago, a quaint little Moorish-looking town, perched high above the plain.

Here they halted for the night ; and, having obtained permission from the corregidor, proceeded to set up their theatre in the market-place. To unload the cart, to fix the poles, to stretch the canvas, and construct a tent capable of holding a hundred people, was the work of less than an hour. This done, one of the younger members of the company went round the town with a tin trumpet, and proclaimed that there would be a comedy performed that evening at seven o'clock by the celebrated Senor Lope de Rueda and his famous company.

In the mean time, Cervantes was admitted to all the secrets of the stage and the dressing-room. The stage consisted of a flooring of loose boards raised on wooden blocks at a distance of about four feet from the ground. An old tapestry curtain at the back was all the scenery with which they were provided, and behind it the actors dressed, and the musicians were

stationed. As for the theatrical wardrobe, it could not well be more scanty. A few tawdry ribbons for the women, four white cloaks bordered with gilt leather for the men ; a few false beards, some shepherds' crooks, and a stock of red, white, and black paint, were all the "properties" then deemed necessary for the Spanish stage. In this respect, Lope de Rueda and his company were no worse off than other players, and it was not till after his death that scenery and costume were introduced into the drama.

At seven o'clock Miguel went round to the front, and became one of the audience. The corregidor, and some others of the chief townsmen and their families, sat in the front, while at the back the rest of the audience were crowded together on narrow benches formed of rough planks supported on barrels. The performances began with a ballad sung behind the curtain to the accompaniment of an old guitar. Then two shepherds and a shepherdess made their appearance. The shepherds made love to her in verse, and she refused to listen to either. Presently a Biscayan boor came on. He covered the shepherds with ridicule—he made puns on every word they uttered—he courted the shepherdess before their eyes, and he convulsed the audience with laughter. In this boor

Cervantes recognized Lope de Rueda ; but his delight and his wonder went beyond mere mirth. His heart beat—he could scarcely breathe—he forgot the audience, the place, his own troubles, everything save the play, and the genius that created it.

By and by appeared a rich old shepherd, a negro, a barber, and the barber's wife. The Biscayan, who was throughout the hero and practical joker of the piece, cudgelled the negro, quarrelled with the barber, mystified his wife, turned out to be the son of the rich shepherd, and was at last rewarded for his wit and mischief with the hand of the fair shepherdess. It was but a simple plot ; yet, simple as it was, it carried with it every sympathy of the spectators. They laughed till the tent rocked again, during the comic dialogues. They shouted "Well done, Biscayan !" when Lope cudgelled the negro. They wept when he fell on the old shepherd's neck, and implored a father's blessing. As for Cervantes, he felt as if he had dropped down from heaven to earth when it was all over, and sat like a statue long after the audience had dispersed. Presently a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he started as if he had been roused from a deep sleep.

"How now, brother scribe," said Lope, laughing.
"Didst not approve of my acting to-night ? Methinks

thou wert the only one who neither laughed nor applauded."

"How could I do aught," replied the boy, "but wonder?"

Whereupon the poet made him another of his courtly bows, and said,—

"I had sooner play to thee for audience and receive that criticism for my guerdon, Miguel Cervantes, than have mine ears deafened and my pockets filled with ducats by any mob in Spain!"

On the second day after this event they reached Segovia, having crossed the great mountains by a rocky pass where neither trees nor grass were to be found, and the ground was clothed only with a reddish-brown moss. They arrived after sunset, so that Cervantes could discern but the outlines of a rock-built city, rising in the midst of a deep valley, surrounded by dim lines of Moorish battlements and turrets, and approached on one side by the arches of a gigantic aqueduct. That night Lope de Rueda and his company put up at a hostelry in the suburbs, and in the morning the poet and his young friend went together into the city, to make arrangements for setting up the theatre on an enlarged scale, and to see something of the new cathedral.

And behold! almost the first person whom the

fugitive encountered, face to face in the market-place, was his cousin and god-father, Miguel de Correa !

Poor Cervantes ! He was taken by the collar at once, like an escaped criminal. His cousin had heard of his flight ; but, as the Count had kept discreetly silent on the subject of his own cowardice, no reason had been found for his disappearance. His mother believed him drowned or murdered. His father had issued printed descriptions of him, and offered rewards for his discovery. All Alcala de Henares was in a ferment, and prayers had even been offered up for his safety if living, or his soul if dead, in the Church of St. Mary the Greater.

“ You go back to your parents, sirrah, this very day ! ” stormed Don Miguel de Correa.

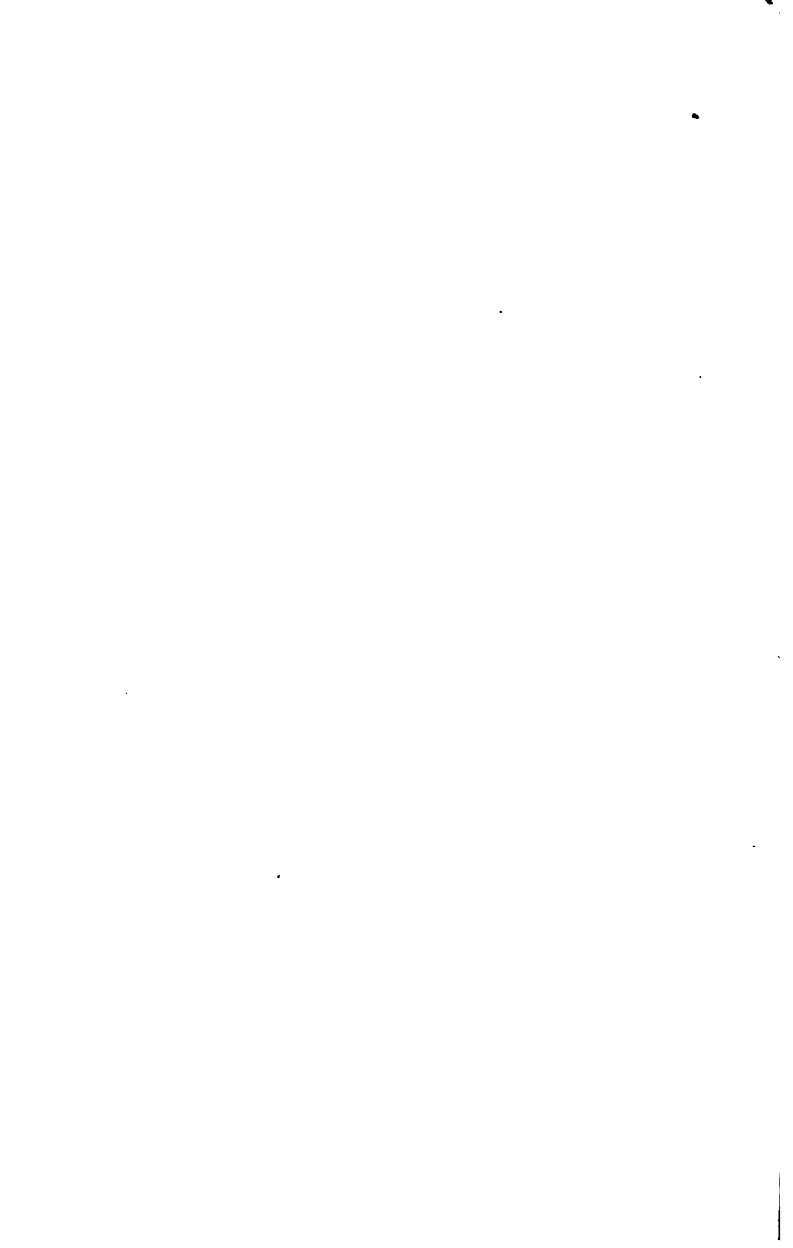
In vain the poor boy explained the causes of his flight ; in vain Lope de Rueda interceded for him with all the eloquence of which he was master. Cousin Correa was inexorable.

“ No, by Saint Jago ! ” said he. “ He deserves all the punishment he can get ; he shall not stay an hour.”

So our poor little hero was handed over to the care of a troop of muleteers just starting for Alcala de Henares, and Lope de Rueda walked with them to the top of a steep hill, about a mile beyond the city



The parting of Cervantes and Lope de Rueda.



gates, where he and Cervantes took leave of each other with embraces and lamentations.

"I shall never, never forget thee, Senor Rueda," sobbed the boy.

"Nor I thee, my Miguel. Fare thee well !"

So they parted ; and Cervantes, many and many a year afterwards, in the preface to a collection of his own comedies, remembered his old friend, and embalmed his fame against all the accidents of time to come.

"That boy will be a great man, some day !" sighed the poet, as he went slowly back to his inn. "Now, by my faith, I had given ten gold pieces sooner than have parted from him !"

CHAPTER VII.

Cervantes at Salamanca.

WE cannot follow Cervantes step by step through all the years of his boyhood. Such a record would fill a greater number of volumes than most readers care to peruse, or most authors to write. Let us, then, take the more important events, and leave the lesser ; passing rapidly over the time that lay between.

For the first few years after his ignominious return from Segovia, our young Miguel pursued his education under the care of a certain ecclesiastic named Juan Lopez de Hoyos, a man of vast learning, and a professor of literature and *belles lettres*. He received the boy as one of his private pupils, and found him a promising scholar ; quick, apprehensive, gifted with a retentive memory, a fine ear, and an unusual amount of discrimination. The professor himself could scarcely detect an error in logic, or a false quantity, more readily than Cervantes. It must be confessed, however, that the lad was not always quite so steady a student as he might have been. He tormented the poor professor sadly at times ; had deplorable fits of

idleness, now and then, as of old ; and inveterately preferred Homer to Aristotle, Virgil to Tacitus, and the *Cançionero General* (a collection of Spanish ballads) to all the wisdom of all the ancients put together. Nay, worse than this, he was terribly given to scribbling rhymes and pastorals when he ought to have been quite otherwise employed ; and often, when his master believed him to be hard at work upon Euclid, or deep in Cicero's *Academics*, he was scrawling sonnets on the margin of his book, or drawing caricatures of the professor himself, and his ancient sister, Donna Maria.

Thus matters went on till Cervantes was between eighteen and nineteen ; when being, despite all his shortcomings, a very tolerable scholar for his age, the youth was despatched to the famous University of Salamanca, to finish his education.

And now, for the first time, our hero lived in a great city, saw something of life, and began to look upon himself as a young man. He had an annual allowance from his father—scanty enough, it is true ; but still sufficient to enable him now and then to take a cheap ticket for a bull-fight, or a gallery-seat in the theatre. And he enjoyed the dignity of living in chambers—that is to say, he lodged on the fifth story in a great house in the street of the Moors, where he

had a sitting-room of ten feet square, and a cupboard which he called his bed-room. Here, however, with youth, hope, good spirits, and health, he lived as happily as a king. His favourite poets lay unrebuked upon his breakfast-table. He could scribble as many bad pastorals as he liked, and no one was the wiser. Above all, he made plenty of friends among the undergraduates of his college. He possessed indeed, precisely those qualifications of temper and those personal accomplishments which are most becoming in youth. He was brave as a lion, generous as a prince, tender-hearted as a woman; and though, perhaps, a trifle too hot-headed and passionate, he was as ready to repair a fault as to commit it. Besides all this, he was a capital fencer, a bold horseman, a fleet runner, a good dancer, a first-rate mimic, and, as a companion, so ready-witted and amusing that, before he had been many weeks in Salamanca, no pleasure-party or student's supper was complete without him. Then, with all his love of mischief, he was so good-natured that it was no wonder his fellow-collegians loved him. He was ever ready to help those who were more idle or less clever than himself; and his poetical talents were always in request. Either P  p   wanted his hexameters smoothed—or Carlos, who was competing for the prize poem, could not, for the life of him, think of

a subject—or Guzman, who was in love with the corregidor's daughter, required a sonnet that should express within the space of fourteen lines all the admiration and despair of which the collegiate heart is capable at the mature age of nineteen.

In these, and similar emergencies, Cervantes was the universal resource, and his ready pen soon extricated the supplicants from all their difficulties. Thus he began already to acquire some little reputation as a poet; and when, occasionally, a graceful ballad, a comic dialogue, or an epigram more than usually witty, came to be handed about the University, or even found its way accidentally into print, the little world of Salamanca was wont to whisper the name of Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra.

His chief friend at this time was a young man named Diego Montalba, a wild clever fellow, who was always getting into broils, running in debt, or quarrelling with his landlady. He lodged in the same house with Cervantes, and many a mad prank they played together, as the college legends tell. To this day it is remembered how they one night patrolled the streets of Salamanca, blindfolding and handcuffing every watchman that they met; and how, on another occasion, when the Alcalde Mayor and all the heads of the colleges had one day gone up to the top of a high

Moorish tower in the very heart of the city, on a visit of archæological investigation, these two mischief-loving students quietly turned the key of an upper staircase on the whole learned party, and there left them, till they were accidentally released some hours after.

One of their most amusing practical jokes, however, was played off at the expense of Cervantes's old enemy, the Count of Guadalajara, who happened to be studying in the same University. This young man had not improved with years. He continued to be as haughty and insolent as ever, and was, besides, both idle, ignorant, and self-indulgent. Being an orphan, and very wealthy, he had large funds at his command, and spent them as he pleased. To be possessed of much money and little wit is, perhaps, the greatest moral misfortune that can befall a very young man. The Count of Guadalajara presented a striking instance of the evil consequences of such a combination. He valued wealth solely as a means of personal enjoyment and aggrandisement. Parsimonious towards others, he was generous only to himself. He denied himself nothing. His lodgings, his horses, his fine clothes, were the admiration of every foolish fellow in Salamanca; and as for his table, he was known to have every delicacy that could be procured in or out of season.

In short he was a confirmed glutton, and as sickly, bilious, and inactive as all gluttons deservedly are ; so Diego Montalba and Miguel Cervantes determined to give him a lesson which he should not readily forget.

It happened that the Cardinal Espinosa, President of the Royal Council, and Inquisitor-General of Spain, passed, on one occasion, through the province of Leon, and visited the city of Salamanca, where he was received with great honour. Being solicited to inspect the colleges, he rested two days at the University, and each day was invited to a splendid public banquet, where he dined in state at a separate table, while the heads of the colleges, the city authorities, the professors, and the students of rank, occupied four long tables in the centre of the hall. The students of lower degree had a collation spread for them in another room, which communicated by means of a gallery with the great hall ; and from this gallery they could, if they pleased, witness the banquet below. In consequence of this arrangement, the Count of Guadalajara feasted with the grandees, while Cervantes and his friend dined at the far merrier tables of the untitled collegians. What laughter there was among them ! How inimitably comic was Diego Montalba ; and how Cervantes, with his brilliant wit and admirable mimicry, kept his

neighbours in a roar ! Not one of the least sources of their mirth was an occasional peep at the Count of Guadalajara from the gallery of communication.

"He has demolished seven dishes of ortolans !" said one.

"He is storming the great game pyramid in the centre of the long table !" added another.

"He has cleared every dish within arm's length," said a third, "and presides, like a victorious warrior over the slain !"

"We shall see him, when the banquet is over," laughed a fourth, "sitting sublime amid the fallen pasties, like Marius in the ruins of Carthage !"

By-and-by, Miguel, and Diego, and three others, rose up and stole quietly away. One might have guessed from their faces that they were bent upon mischief. First of all, they went to the market, which, as the banquet had been held in the middle of the day, was still open. There they bought a couple of fowls, a quarter of kid, and various proportions of eggs, olives, figs, parsley, onions, and rice. These they carried to a cook's shop at the corner of the market-place, and gave orders for the preparation of a gigantic *olla podrida*.* Towards dusk, when the *olla*

* A dish composed of all kinds of food,—fish, flesh, fowl, fruit, and vegetables,—cooked and made hot together.

was ready, they disguised themselves in long furred cloaks and false beards, and carried the huge smoking tureen in solemn procession to the lodgings of the Count of Guadalajara.

Cervantes, having a white wand in his hand, and a huge chain of mock gold about his neck, knocked loudly for admission.

"What do you want?" yawned a sleepy footman.

"We come," said Cervantes, "charged with a special mission to the most noble Count of Guadalajara."

"The Count is taking his siesta," said the valet, saucily. "You cannot see him."

"Though he were dying, we must see him," replied Cervantes, with an air of great importance.

The footman made as if he would shut the door in their faces.

"Varlet!" thundered Cervantes, producing a great folded paper, "tell thy master that a special deputation, bearing greeting from the most noble and reverend Cardinal Don Diego Espinosa, desireth instant speech with him!"

The footman turned pale, bowed down to the very ground, and ushered them, with the utmost ceremony, into the Count's apartment. The Count rose

to receive them, looking somewhat perplexed and apprehensive.

"You come, gentlemen," said he, "from"

"His eminence the most noble and reverend Cardinal Don Diego Espinosa," interrupted Cervantes pompously, opening the great paper, and flourishing his wand. "The most noble Cardinal to the Count of Guadalajara sendeth greeting. Whereas it hath, by the most noble Cardinal, been observed with displeasure and disgust that the Count of Guadalajara did, both to-day and yesterday, at the banqueting tables, devour and consume the food there provided in an uncourtly and unseemly fashion, sinfully unbecoming in a nobleman of Spain, he is hereby condemned, in punishment thereof, to empty the accompanying vessel of right-good cookeries, within the space of one hour, on pain of expulsion from the royal universities, and payment of a fine of one thousand golden ducats. (Signed) ESPINOSA, Cardinal, and Inquisitor-General."

The unfortunate gourmand clasped his hands in mute horror, and gazed upon the steaming chaos of meats and vegetables.

"Is there no help for it?" stammered he.

The five students shook their heads solemnly.

The Count took some gold pieces from his desk

"If—if you, gentlemen," said he, beseechingly, "were to—to honour me by accepting a few gold ducats, and would not object to supping"

"Unprincipled monster!" cried Cervantes, holding up his hands. "Gentlemen of the deputation, he dares to offer us a bribe! No, Count of Guadalajara; we are incorruptible. Eat, Sir Count!"

"Eat, Sir Count!" echoed the four others.

So the wretched Count sat down, and made the effort. At the third mouthful, he dropped his knife and fork.

"If you would but consider, gentlemen," said he, "that I dined at the banquet not two hours since, and"

"Eat, Sir Count!" interposed Cervantes, authoritatively.

"Eat, Sir Count!" echoed the four others, as before.

The Count tried again. The perspiration rose in beads upon his forehead. He pushed his plate away.

"I cannot," he said, faintly; "'twere death—death by repletion! Here, Gomez!"

An elderly man-servant made his appearance.

"Take the key of my bureau, and make out an order for one thousand ducats. Gentlemen, I will

leave Salamanca to-morrow. His Eminence will not enforce that I be publicly expelled?"

"We will report your lordship's submission," said Cervantes, gravely. "Doubtless his Eminence will be merciful."

So, carrying with them the order for the one thousand ducats, they went back to Miguel's lodgings, and there wrote a bantering letter to the Count, returning his money, and advising him to be less greedy in future. After which they spent a merry evening together, and supped off the remains of the *olla podrida*.

The story was soon known all over the University; and the Count, unable to discover the perpetrators of the joke, or to endure the ridicule with which he was met wherever he made his appearance, was glad, before long, to leave Salamanca and retire to his estates.

Thus, in boyish frolics, and study, and the writing of sonnets and pastorals numberless, glided away the pleasant years of our hero's college life, till the month of October, 1568, when Queen Isabella of Valois died. Then Senor Juan Lopez de Hoyos, who had been of late promoted to the literary professorship of Madrid, remembered the poetical talents of his former pupil, and summoned Cervantes to aid him in the compo-

sition of certain elegies, inscriptions, and funeral orations which were needed for the royal funeral. So Miguel took a hasty farewell of his fellow-students, and repaired to Madrid, where events happened by which the whole course of his after-life was influenced.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our hero finds a patron, and enters on a new path in life.

QUEEN ISABELLA was buried on the 24th of October, 1568, with a pomp and splendour which in our time would be deemed too theatrical for so solemn an occasion, but which was in accordance with the taste of three centuries ago. The church of Descalzas Reales was hung throughout with draperies and banners of black velvet, embroidered in silver with Spanish and Latin couplets, heraldic devices, and funereal emblems. A waxen image of the deceased queen, dressed in her robes of state, was carried before the coffin in the procession, and stood beside it at the altar. Learned professors read poems and orations in her honour ; a cardinal preached the funeral sermon ; a *miserère* was performed by four hundred musicians ; and the church was lined from end to end by a triple row of halberdiers, with torches in their hands.

Cervantes witnessed the whole of this splendid pageant from the gallery above the great entrance. He had the right to be there ; for not only were many of the embroidered inscriptions composed by

him, but the poetical elegy recited by Professor Juan Lopez Hoyos was also of his writing. The next day there appeared an account of the last illness, death, and obsequies of the deceased princess, written by Hoyos, and published by royal command, in which this elegy and four other poems by "his most favourite and much-loved scholar, Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra," were prominently inserted by the good ecclesiastic.* Thus, then, was our student brought for the first time before the public as a man of letters.

Not many weeks after these events, he received, much to his surprise, the honour of an invitation to dine with the Papal ambassador, Prince Julio Aquaviva, son of the Duke of Atri.

"I must, perforce, excuse myself," mused Cervantes, dolefully; for how could I, in my threadbare academic gown, sit at his excellency's table? His very lackeys would scout me!"

But Juan Lopez had his pupil's welfare at heart, and could not endure that he should miss a patron for the want of a doublet.

"Tush, lad!" said he, "an' that be all, shalt have a suit of the best murrey-coloured cloth in Madrid!"

Cervantes coloured up to the roots of his hair,

* *Vide* Roscoe's "Life and Writings of Cervantes."

half with gratitude, and more than half with pride.

"It may not be, good father," he replied. "My parents are poor, and I have well-nigh emptied their purse at Salamanca. As for myself, I have no means to repay thee."

"Thou shalt repay me, lad, when thou art a popular poet, or a placeman at court."

And so, after some hesitation and persuasion, Cervantes accepted the loan of twenty gold crowns, and was measured for a full suit of murrey-coloured cloth, turned up with velvet, and a cloak to match.

On the appointed day, he presented himself at the ambassador's door, and was ushered into a reception-room full of company. An aristocratic-looking young man, scarcely twenty years of age, and dressed entirely in black, advanced to meet him.

"You are welcome, Senor Cervantes," he said, taking him cordially by the hand. "I have read your poems, and rejoice to know their author. We must be better acquainted."

This youth was Julio Aquaviva.

Presently they went down to dinner. Cervantes had never sat at so splendid a table, nor in such society. Wits, poets, historians, officers, painters, and men of rank, met there as equals. The conver-

sation was brilliant; the fare delicate; the host courteous, princely, well-read, and entertaining. After the cloth was removed, rare wines and sweatmeats were handed round, and his excellency led the way to a general discourse upon literary topics. Cervantes, inspired by the subject and the company in which he found himself, spoke of the vocation of the poet with modesty and enthusiasm. He was heard with applause; and when he rose, later in the evening, to take his leave, the prince drew him aside into the deep embrasure of a window, and said, "Senor Cervantes, you are a native, I believe, of Salamanca?"

To which he replied, "I am a student of Salamanca, your excellency; but a native of Alcala de Henares."

"Are you much attached, Senor Cervantes, to Spain as a residence?"

"I love Spain, as a Spaniard, my lord," replied Miguel, somewhat surprised by the inquiry.

"Precisely—as I love Italy. Yet love I not Italy so that I can take no pleasure elsewhere. You would not, perhaps, dislike to travel into other lands—for instance, to visit Rome?"

"To visit Rome, my lord, hath been one of the dreams of my life," said Cervantes, with a sudden leaping of the heart.

The Prince smiled, and laid his hand on the student's shoulder.

"If you will take service with me, senor," he said, graciously, "and journey with me, in the office of chamberlain, to the court of his Holiness, I would fain rob King Philip of his subject."

"I shall be honoured in the permission to attach myself to your excellency's suite," replied Cervantes, bowing low.

"Then it is a treaty signed and concluded. Remember, senor, that we depart hence in six days, and that I shall look for you at my table to-morrow."

Cervantes went back to his lodgings as if he were treading on air. He was chamberlain to the Duke of Atri! He was to visit Rome—Virgil, Cicero, Cæsar's Rome! What a life of travel, of adventure, of poetry, was opening before him!

Poor fellow! he believed his fortune already made; and so, with his imagination all on fire, sat down that very night to write to his parents, and tell them of the prosperity that had befallen him!

CHAPTER IX.

Another phase of the drama in the Middle Ages.

THERE are few pleasures so delightful as the pleasure of travelling in foreign countries. Every day brings some instruction with it. A pleasant sense of novelty accompanies all the common acts of life. We pass along roads and rivers as if through a never-ending gallery of animated pictures. We acquire strange tongues ; become acquainted with new habits and customs ; visit cities famous for their architecture, arts, and manufactures ; trace out the plans of ancient battles on the plains where they were fought ; make pilgrimages to the homes and graves of great men dead and gone ; and learn, by experience of their wisdom, their hospitality, and their works, how to love and appreciate our fellow-men, whatever be their dwelling-place or nation. All these advantages and pleasures were now tasted by Miguel de Cervantes, in his journey to Rome. His Excellency the Prince of Atri left Madrid on the 2nd of December, 1568. He travelled slowly, for the roads were not only bad, but in some places dangerous, and the country places

infested with bands of mercenary troops, who, when not hired out to prosecute the private feuds of noble families, lived by the plunder of wayfarers, and herded together in the mountains. For security, therefore, as well as state, the prince's retinue consisted of nearly a hundred persons, including an escort of fifty armed guards, besides his highness's secretary, almoner, chaplain, chamberlain, valets, pages, and grooms. Aquaviva himself either travelled in a covered litter drawn by six mules, or rode a superb black Barbary horse with black and violet housings. When on horseback, he generally summoned his secretary and chamberlain to ride on either side of him, and so held pleasant conversation of books and men, history, poetry, and the arts. Having been destined to the Church from childhood, he was unusually staid for so young a man; but he was at the same time generous, refined, highly cultivated, and kind-hearted; and Cervantes became daily more and more attached to his patron.

Thus, in pompous procession, the ambassador and his train followed the borders of the blue Mediterranean throughout the south of Spain and France to sunny Italy. Cervantes has himself described the delight with which he visited the tower-encircled city of Valencia, with its rich suburban orchards and fruitful vineyards; and Barcelona, which he calls

“the queen of all beautiful cities,” magnificent with ships and quays, and watched round by snow-capped mountains. Thence they passed through Perpignan, the gate between France and Spain—through Nismes, rich in Roman ruins—through Avignon, where Prince Aquaviva and all his suite rested for three days in the Palace of the Popes, and saw the tomb of Petrarch’s Laura ; and so on through Dauphiné, till one morning a wonderful vision of mighty mountains, glittering with ice and snow like frosted silver, broke suddenly upon their sight, and Cervantes for the first time gazed upon the Alps. Then for several days more they journeyed forward, ever drawing nearer and nearer, till they skirted the borders of a great desolate blue lake, climbed the shoulder of a huge mountain deep in snow, and descended into the plains of Northern Italy. Then each day carried them farther, ever farther, from the vision of frosted peaks ; and by-and-by they came to Milan, where again they rested, being received by the citizens with royal honours, and lodged in a vast stone palace richly furnished. Here they were entertained with a sacred dramatic piece which lasted for three days, and was performed in the open place against the east front of the cathedral.

This dramatic piece, called in those times a *Mystery*,

was played out of doors, upon a raised scaffolding a hundred feet in length. In front, in a wide semi-circle, rose nine rows of seats, one row above another, with awnings overhead, for the nobles, officers, and principal citizens; the centre seats being reserved for the prince and his followers. The space between the seats and the scaffolding, which would answer to the pit of our modern theatres, was filled by a standing crowd of soldiers, peasants, and artisans.

It was a strange play. The actors (and there were ninety-two of them) sat on benches at each side of the stage, and went down into the middle of the platform when it was their turn to speak. In one corner stood a great painted dragon's head, the jaws of which opened and shut by machinery, to represent the mouth of hell. At the opposite corner was a clumsy heaven of painted clouds; while three wooden towers at the back of the stage were supposed to stand for Europe, Asia, and Africa. America had been discovered by Columbus seventy years before, but the drama refused, as yet, to sanction that innovation.

The piece was called "The Three Dons," and the three Dons were three martyrs, whose fate it was to be tormented and persecuted during the whole three afternoons that their performance lasted. Devils in red and black garments came out of the mouth of hell

and beset them with pitchforks, or tempted them with worldly wealth and luxuries ; but they were consoled from time to time by three mystical personages in white and gold, called Human Succour, Divine Grace, and Divine Comfort, by whose help they clambered up triumphantly into the region of clouds at the close of the third day's performance, and bowed their farewell out of heaven, to the music of trumpets and viols.

"Methinks that, for souls in bliss, our friends the martyrs show us too much courtesy !" laughed the prince, as they passed back to their lodging through the crowded square, attended by a double file of halberdiers. "What says Senor Cervantes to the entertainment ?"

"That I have well-nigh fallen asleep over it, any time these past three days, my lord," replied Miguel.

"In good sooth, 'tis a marvellous dull pastime—but, poor folks, they meant their dulness kindly."

"Your highness should have seen Lope de Rueda !" sighed Cervantes.

And that evening, at supper, he amused his patron with an account of how, years ago, he ran away to Segovia, and became acquainted with the father of the Spanish stage.

The next day they resumed their onward journey.

CHAPTER X.

A Roman Carnival three centuries ago.

PRINCE AQUAVIVA and his retinue arrived at the gates of Rome on a sunny afternoon towards the middle of February, 1569 ; having taken ten weeks to accomplish the journey. A warm, golden light lay upon the city and the mountains, wrapping the unfinished dome of St. Peter's in a tender haze, and touching the armed seraph on the Castle of St. Angelo with a glory direct from heaven. Some pilgrims, who had been travelling for protection in the rear of the cavalcade during the last three days, now hastened forward, and fell on their knees to kiss the threshold of the gate leading to the Holy City. Cervantes—worshipping the wondrous birthplace of ancient glory and modern art, the city of the Cæsars, of Horace and Virgil, Michael Angelo and Raphael—felt as if he, too, could have knelt down before its portals !

They passed through the archway, and a detachment of the pope's guard turned out, and escorted them. They rode by the huge cathedral, all obscured with scaffoldings, whence, their day's work being ended, the

workmen had all departed. They crossed the Tiber by the bridge of St. Angelo, and, defiling slowly through the crowded heart of the city, came presently to a great mansion of white stone, built in the form of a quadrangle, with a paved courtyard in the midst, where a number of liveried retainers poured out to meet them, crying "Welcome—welcome home, our lord and master!"

Here they alighted. They had at last arrived at the palace of the prince of Atri, and come to the end of their journey.

That night, Cervantes slept profoundly ; for he was weary of long travelling, and glad to be at rest. The next morning he was awakened by a confused sound of shouting, bell-ringing, and trumpeting in the street below his window. He rose, and looked out. The narrow causeway was full of people, some on foot, some on horseback, and some in carriages. Nearly all wore masks upon their faces ; some were disguised as fools, Moors, Turks, Chinese, Cossacks, and so forth ; and some carried bunches of flowers in their hands. On both sides of the street, as far as he could see on either side, the houses were decorated with tapestries and flags. The windows were crowded with spectators. The air resounded with music and laughter, and all Rome seemed in a riot of festivity.

He rubbed his eyes. He thought he must be dreaming. He dressed hastily, and went down stairs into the great hall, where the servants were lounging at the windows and watching the crowd beyond.

"How now?" said Miguel. "Is it the pope's birthday, or hath the world gone mad this morning?"

"Neither," replied a voice at his shoulder, which he recognized as that of the prince of Atri, "it is our Carnival season. For three days a universal holiday reigneth. Go forth and share the follies and frolics of the time, Senor Cervantes. I shall not need your presence till the world hath sobered down again."

Cervantes thanked his patron, and, having snatched a hurried breakfast, ventured out to see what he could of Rome and its Carnival. He had not gone many yards before he found himself powdered with flour from head to foot, from a window above his head. A lady, passing in her carriage, observed his misfortune, beckoned him, smilingly, towards her, and drenched him suddenly with rose-water, by means of a large squirt hidden in her mantle. Presently an orange hit him on the side of the head, and knocked his hat under the feet of the horses, who trampled it into a shapeless lump of mud. At each of his misfortunes the crowd roared and applauded with delight; and Cervantes, whose hot Spanish blood could ill

endure mockery, had hard work to keep his temper. Knowing, however, that to be angry at such a season was to be ridiculous, he struggled on, somehow, through the noisy crowd till he came to a shop where they sold all kinds of Carnival finery. Here he bought a half-mask, and a cap of white linen, and armed himself with a bladder tied to a short whip. With his head and eyes thus protected, he sallied forth again, and found himself on more equal terms with the general enemy. Insensibly, he fell in with the popular humour. His spirits caught the infectious folly. He laughed—he leaped—he sent hats flying into the gutter—he sprang on carriage-steps, and complimented unknown ladies on their bright eyes—he became, in short, a Roman for the moment, and gave himself up to as wild an enjoyment of the scene as any native there. Thus he rambled on, up and down the Corso and the open places adjoining, till he wearied of the sport, and was about to turn away in search of a quieter neighbourhood, when a lady sitting in a low balcony close beside him held up her bouquet to him and nodded, as if in token of recognition.

“I know you,” said she, leaning down, as he approached her. “You sent me these flowers.”

“Nay, I would that I had been so happy,” replied

Cervantes, gallantly ; "but, I pray you, give me one bud to keep in remembrance of you."

The lady drew back suddenly. "Your pardon, signor," she stammered, "I—I mistook you for another."

"Alas ! I feared so," said Miguel, "for I am a stranger, and friendless. Yet, still, give me the bud, lady, for mere charity."

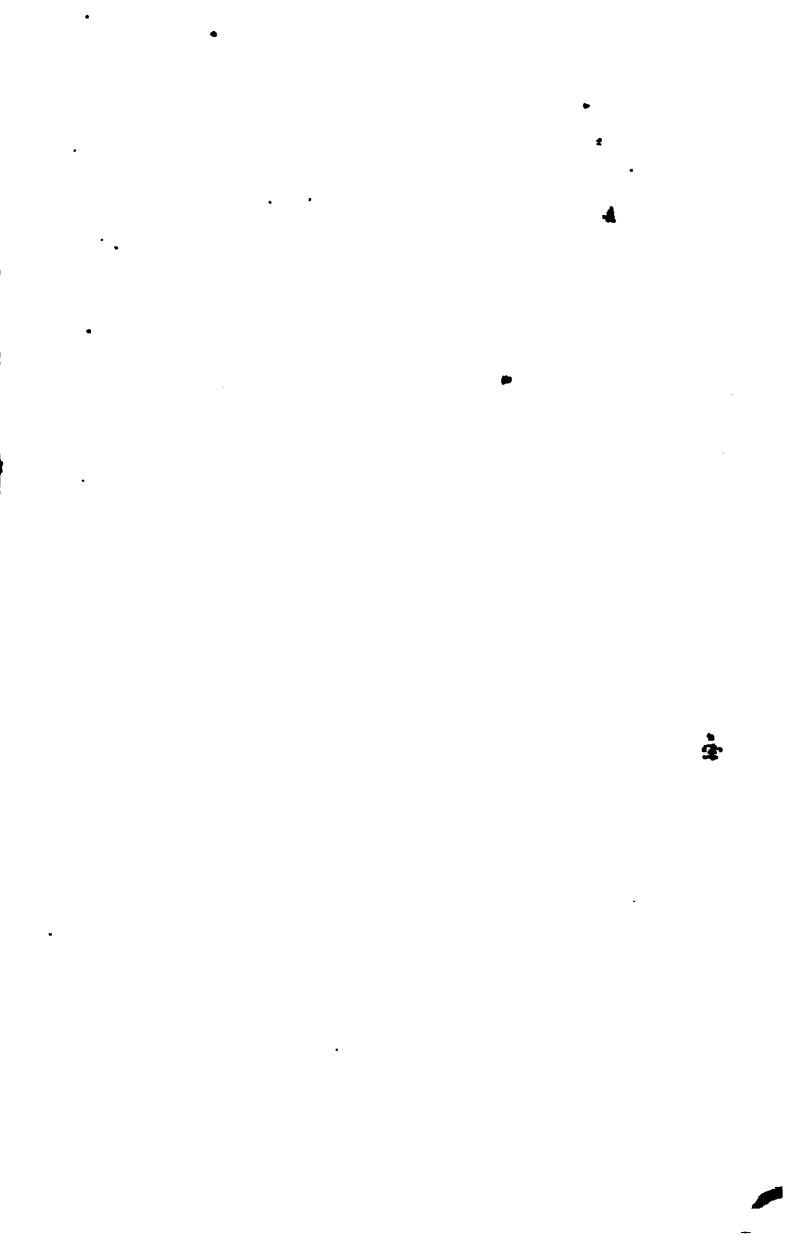
"Charity ? Art a beggar, then ?" laughed the lady.

"The poorest of beggars, who, since he hath listened to thy voice, hath not even a heart left to call his own."

"Then I will give thee the white rose," said she, disregarding the remonstrances of another lady at her side, who whispered earnestly in her ear, as if to prevent the gift. "Pshaw, Giulietta, 'tis but a Carnival folly—he shall have it !"

Saying which, she drew a white rose from her bouquet and gave it to Cervantes, who contrived to touch the hand with his lips as he received it.

At this moment a frightful incident diverted his attention. He saw an open carriage approaching, the only occupant of which was a gentleman richly dressed. Suddenly a man broke through the crowd, sprang on the carriage-step, shot the gentleman dead in his seat, and immediately dived among the vehicles and dis-





Cervantes at the Carnival.

appeared. Uttering a cry of horror, Cervantes drew his sword and rushed forward ; but the murderer had already escaped—the frightened coachman had driven off with his ghastly burthen—the passers-by were jostling, laughing, and crowding on as merrily as ever, and none seemed to heed the act of blood which had been done before their eyes.

“ Merciful Heaven !” cried Cervantes, “ are you all blind ? Did you not see a man killed, and does no one pursue the slayer ?”

“ Pshaw ! we should have enough to do in Rome if we ran after every assassin !” said a bystander, coolly.

Cervantes put his hand to his forehead, like a man waking from sleep. The strangeness and horror of the scene had quite confused him.

“ Holy saints !” he ejaculated, “ is there no justice here ?”

“ ’Twas but a *vendetta*,”* said the other, with a shrug. “ You are a stranger, probably, and do not know the ways of the place. We are used to these things, especially at Carnival-time. It is the second I have seen to-day.”

Cervantes turned away without a word. Sick at heart, almost giddy, he plunged down the nearest pas-

* A private revenge.

sage, and, without giving even a glance towards the lady with whom he had been jesting a few moments before, hurried away from the noisy Corso at his utmost speed, nor paused till he found himself in an open lonely place, with a broad yellow river rolling turbidly at his feet. All here was silence and desolation. The ruins of a little circular temple on his left—a boat moored to a stake close by—some fragments of an antique bridge lifting themselves here and there above the troubled current—on the opposite bank some half-decaying houses and a line of ancient wall, with fields and trees beyond—and behind him, Rome, with its church spires and pinnacles, and the great unfinished dome overtopping all the rest ;—such were the characteristics and surroundings of the spot to which he had fled. He sat down upon a fragment of fallen architrave and gazed about him. Here was the Tiber—there the Temple of Vesta. The Colosseum, he knew, could not be far off. His thoughts went back to the days of the great Republic and the conquering Empire, and he fell into a profound reverie. By-and-by a peasant came driving past, standing upright in his rude cart like a charioteer of old. Cervantes inquired his way to the Colosseum, and, directed by the peasant, found himself presently in the shadow of its gigantic walls. Tier above tier,

arch above arch, it towered up like a mountain against the deep blue sky. Wild flowers and grasses grew in its rents and chasms, as in the furrows of a rocky precipice. High on the uppermost ridges of its ruined corridors waved young trees, which had taken root like mere wind-wafted weeds, a hundred and fifty feet above the level ground. Entering through a gap in the lower wall, Cervantes made his way into a vaulted passage choked up in places with fallen rubbish, and thence passed into the central arena. Within the great theatre the ground was strewn with masses of stone and brickwork which had been quarried out of the walls for building purposes. The workmen's tools, the carts for transporting the materials (some of them ready loaded), the scaffoldings, were all there, just as they had been left from the day or two before. Not content to let Time do its worst upon the noble ruin, the priests and princes of the modern city were daily stealing from its strength, stripping it of its columns and cornices, and even tearing away the iron cramps that bound its stones together, to build their churches and palaces. Cervantes sighed to see the desecration of the place, and rejoiced in the good fortune which had brought him there, for the first time, in the absence of the spoilers.

All at once, in the midst of the deep silence, he heard a clash of swords. He started, listened, drew his own rapier, and ran in the direction from which the sound appeared to come. Presently the strokes ceased. He paused, and listened again. Then they began afresh, louder, as it seemed, and nearer. He became entangled in a maze of dark passages—turned back—grew confused—ran blindly forward—heard a cry of agony—shouted aloud—listened—ran—shouted again—emerged suddenly upon an open space, and found—only a dead man, lying on his face in the bright sunlight, a space of trampled grass, a pool of blood, a mask, and a broken sword.

Cervantes flew to the fallen man, lifted up his head, pressed his hand upon his heart, and then laid him gently down. He looked round in every direction. He climbed a little mound close by ; but there was no one anywhere in sight. Only, growing fainter and farther at every echo, he heard the galloping of a horse's feet.

"Heaven help us !" groaned he. "Call ye this the Holy City ? 'Tis an accursed city—a city of blood !"

Slowly and mournfully he turned away, and retraced his steps towards that part of Rome in which was situated the palace of the prince of Atri. Again he found himself in the midst of maskers and carriages,

his eyes blinded with dust, his ears deafened with laughter, his heart heavy with loathing. He pushed hastily along, neither looking nor heeding as he went. Suddenly the crowd surged back. A great distant shouting was heard. It drew nearer and nearer, and was caught up by thousands on the way.

"They come ! they come !" cried the populace, as if with one voice.

"They come !" echoed Cervantes, turning to a woman, who was striving to push before him. "Who come ?"

"Why, the Jews, to be sure !" replied she. "'Tis the Jew-race to-day."

Cervantes shuddered ; for he had heard how the Jews of Rome were cruelly compelled to race for the amusement of the people on public holidays. Again the crowd fell back with an irresistible impulse, leaving a clear passage down the middle of the street ; and then some twenty bronzed and panting wretches, naked, bleeding, pursued by men and horses, goaded on with lances, pelted with offal, and hooted by tens of thousands all along the line, flew past at the utmost speed of their trembling limbs, and were out of sight in a moment. The crowd instantly closed up behind them, and followed like a rushing tide.

"Poor souls !" ejaculated Cervantes, involuntarily.

"How, stranger! Dost pity the accursed Hebrews?" said one of the crowd, turning sharply upon him.

"Nay, they are men," replied our hero; "not beasts of the chase."

The Roman looked at him suspiciously, and presently disappeared among the crowd.

That evening Rome was illuminated, the theatres were thronged with maskers, the Tiber was covered with lighted gondolas, and the prince of Atri held a great reception and supper, at which some hundreds of nobles, dignitaries of the Church, and great officers of state, native and foreign, were present. When all the guests were gone, and Aquaviva had retired to his private apartments, he sent for his chamberlain, and said—

"Senor Cervantes, your Spanish Inquisition is not, methinks, the most merciful of tribunals. In Madrid, if I remember rightly, you sometimes burn your Jews and heretics?"

Cervantes bowed. He could not conceive what his patron was going to say next.

"Did you ever witness an *auto-da-fé*, Senor Cervantes?"

"Never, my lord; and Heaven forbid that ever I should do so."

The prince smiled meaningly, and laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder.

"Your disposition is tender and kindly, Senor Cervantes," he said ; "and I would not have it otherwise. But let me warn you not too publicly to profess it, where religious prejudices are concerned—especially in Rome. There hath been one with me to-night, inquiring of your antecedents, and observing upon certain things which you were heard to say aloud this morning at the Jew-race. Hadst not been a servant of a servant of the Church, to-morrow might have found thee in a dungeon of St. Angelo. Good night."

CHAPTER XI.

A Protestant martyr.

ON the 17th of May, about three months after his return to Rome, Prince Aquaviva was, with great pomp, raised to the rank of a Cardinal in the Romish Church. Cervantes was present at the ceremony, as well as at the Easter festivals, which were very splendid, consisting of grand religious and military processions, stately masses, public benedictions, illuminations, and exhibitions of fireworks. He also visited the wonders of painting, still fresh from the brushes of Raphael and Michael Angelo ; the prisons of the early Christian martyrs ; the catacombs, which were their places of burial ; the ruined temples, amphitheatres, aqueducts, and palaces of the ancient Roman Empire ; and all that was most curious and interesting, both to the scholar and the Christian, in that famous city.

His curiosity satisfied, however,—his eyes sated with novelty, and his imagination with splendour,—Cervantes began to weary of his position. To be chamberlain to any man, whether king or cardinal,

was insufficient for the ardent ambition of that aspiring nature. He was young, brave, restless, full of a poetic enthusiasm and a love of adventure, that no inactive subordinate career could long be expected to content. To loiter away the morning among the crowd of young officers, churchmen, pages, painters, poets, and other applicants for praise or patronage that daily thronged the antechamber of the new cardinal, soon became intolerable to Miguel Cervantes. He made pleasant acquaintances ; but no friendships. He saw plenty of life ; but he scorned to be a looker-on, and not an actor. The clerical atmosphere in which he lived, also, seemed to hem him in with observances and ceremonies ; and he often looked back with regret to the old wild days of his college-life at Salamanca. Now, when he had danced attendance all the long day in his highness's antechamber, with a gold chain round his neck and a long white wand in his hand, chatting with this person and that ; ushering some in to an audience, and some out ; attending at the prince's elbow during dinner, and sometimes accompanying him when he waited upon his holiness at the Vatican ;—now, in the midst of all this tiresome and artificial life, his only pleasure was, at dusk, or in the golden summer evenings, when the shadows of ancient arches lay long upon the

parched grasses of the Campagna, to fling away his wand and chain of office, spring upon horseback, and gallop madly away over the meadows behind the Vatican, or out towards the blue hills of Albano. Then he felt free again ; and then, too, he enjoyed the luxury of danger, for the country round about was wild and lawless, and he who rode alone at close of day had need know how to use his pistols at a moment's notice.

At length, towards the end of June, or the beginning of July, a circumstance occurred which altered the aspect of our hero's career.

He had been sent to the Vatican with a letter for the pope, and waited there nearly an hour for his reply. As he came away through long suites of cool mosaic-paven halls and great marble staircases, and emerged upon the blinding light and heat of the outer courtyard, he felt as if he had stepped out in the face of a furnace. In the act of crossing this courtyard, he paused to listen. It seemed to him that he heard a sound like the hum of many voices. He hastened forward. He came out into the great Piazza of St. Peter's, almost deserted an hour before, and found the whole scene strangely altered.

Some workmen were now erecting a lofty iron post in the centre of the piazza ; others were unloading a

cart filled with wood ; a detachment of soldiers was drawn up across the whole width of the vast enclosure, and a considerable crowd of lookers-on was rapidly assembling from all quarters. Cervantes went up to the officer in command, and inquired if any particular ceremony was about to take place.

"The most religious ceremony of burning alive one Richard Atkins, an English heretic,"* replied the officer, courteously.

"Alas ! what crime hath he committed ?" asked Miguel, shuddering.

The officer looked at him with surprise.

"Can you, Signor, who are a good Catholic, and whom I know to be in the service of the Prince-Cardinal Aquaviva, ask so strange a question ?" said he. "Is heresy alone no crime in your eyes ?"

"Nay, it is a grievous error," replied Cervantes ; "but one, methinks, which were better met with persuasion than punishment. Surely, 'twere more acceptable in the sight of Heaven that we reclaimed this lost sheep, than that we put him to a miserable death !"

* For a detailed account of the martyrdom of Richard Atkins, a Hertfordshire man, see the "*Harleian Miscellanies*," vol. ii. page 207. This event did not actually take place till 1581, twelve years later than it is here (for the purposes of our story) supposed to occur.

The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"You are too merciful, Signor," said he. "I would to the fire with them all ; and especially so with this one, who is an incurable sinner ! You do not know, perhaps, that he hath openly insulted our holy religion here in Rome—nay, that he did even, some few weeks since, violently enter the Church of St. Peter's, snatch the chalice from the hands of a priest who was performing mass, and strive to tear down the image of our Lady ! After that, being brought to trial, he did exult in the act, and glorify that arch-blasphemer of Germany, Martin Luther, and that wickedest of Jezebels, Elizabeth, queen of England ! Think you that death in any form is expiation enough for such sacrilege ?"

Cervantes was, as the officer had said, a good Catholic. That is to say, he had been born and bred in the ancient religion—had been taught to look upon the Reformation as a deadly plague-spot—upon England and Germany as hotbeds of infidelity—upon Martin Luther as an agent of Satan, and upon Pope Pius the Fifth as God's Vicegerent upon earth. For all this, however, he was, intellectually, in advance of his age. He held human life to be a sacred thing ; and he could not help suspecting that matters of faith were, after all, matters of private conscience, and that every

reasoning being had a right to his individual belief. However, he thanked the officer for his information, and turned away, eager to escape the sight of the tragedy in preparation.

"Of what use is it," thought he, as he plunged hastily into a labyrinth of shady, narrow streets, lying between the Piazza and the Tiber, "of what use is it to burn a poor wretch for his opinions, if, burnt or not, burnt, he remains of those same opinions still? What can it matter to the pope whether this Richard Atkins believes or denies his infallibility? Burn him, and he becomes a martyr. His very martyrdom is a glory to his cause, and the cause itself attracts more inquiry than ever! Alas! these are grievous errors both of charity and policy!"

Musing thus, he reached the bridge of St. Angelo, and was more than halfway across, when he found himself face to face with a dense stream of people, all pouring towards the cathedral. Some carried torches in their hands, and all were racing, hooting, and vociferating like demons. Cervantes drew aside to let them pass. On they came—men, women, and children, and still the crowd grew denser and more dense. Presently a sound of chanting mingled with the shouts. Then came a long procession of priests and friars bearing aloft white banners and massive

silver crosses. Then came a company of the order of Penitents, their faces covered with black hoods, in which were two ghastly holes, through which their eyes gleamed awfully. Then came a detachment of halberdiers—then more priests with banners—and then

Cervantes' heart sank within him ; for the next in order was the unhappy prisoner himself. He was sitting, half naked, upon an ass, with his feet tied under the animal's belly by a thick cord. His grey hair hung long and matted ; his beard was unshorn ; his body scarred with chains, and worn almost to a skeleton. On each side of him walked two priests with blazing torches, which, as they went, they thrust continually at his naked flesh, exhorting him aloud to confess his heresy and return to the true faith before it was too late. To all this he returned no answer ; but, addressing the people in his imperfect Italian, bade them observe how joyfully he bore his torture for Christ's sake. Saying this, he smiled at his tormentors, and himself held the torches to his wounds. Amazed, appalled, yet carried along by an irresistible impulse, Cervantes now suffered himself to be swept onward with the crowd. Once more he found himself in the Piazza of St. Peter's, with the stake and the soldiers before him. He saw the

Englishman bound to the iron pillar—he saw the fagots piled about his legs and feet—he saw the priests crowd round him with the cross, and the martyr point to heaven with uplifted hands. Then they laid their torches to the wood, cruelly contriving to burn his feet and legs first, so as to put him to the fiercest agony. And then the smoke gathered and drifted, and the flame rose higher and higher, and the chanting of the priests swelled louder and deeper, and still the martyr clasped his hands and prayed, till nature gave way under that great torture, and, with one piercing cry, he fainted. That cry was his first, and last. In another moment the flame had twined about his body, and was playing high above his head. Then the smoke gathered in a denser volume, and wrapped him in a deadlier shroud pierced through with tongues of fire; then, drifting with the wind, showed something blindly struggling within; then closed again—drifted—closed—burst out into fresh fury of flame, and rose in a quivering pyramid that, even under the bright mid-day sun, cast a red glare on the faces of the shaven priests and the armour of the guards.

Cervantes saw no more. Paralyzed at first, he had been unable to speak or move. Now, however, beside himself with horror, he found himself

striking furiously to right and left, forcing a path through the multitude, and uttering he knew not what wild words of pity and indignation. Frantically he fought his way out, and fled like a hunted animal through the deserted streets, till, faint with exhaustion, he reached the cardinal's palace, staggered up to his own chamber, bolted the door, and flung himself upon his bed. Motionless, speechless, he lay there till the day declined behind the western mountains, and the great bell summoned all the household to evening prayer. Then he rose mechanically, assumed his chain and wand of office, and went down to the great library where the prince's chaplain read the vesper service. At the door he met a priest coming out, who scowled upon him from beneath his hood, and strode, muttering, down the corridor.

That night the prince sent again for Cervantes to attend him in his bed-chamber.

"Senor Cervantes," said he, gravely and reproachfully, "in a city which is all eyes and ears, how am I to protect you, if with your own lips you condemn yourself?"

"What mean you, my lord?" faltered the chamberlain.

"I mean that you are again suspected, and that to-morrow not even my power may avail to save you.

This day, in the Piazza San Pietro, you were heard to say that which the Church forgives not. Fly, therefore, this very night. Here is gold for you. Take a horse from my stables, and begone."

"But my lord——"

"Not another word," interrupted Aquaviva, sternly: "I do not even ask if you are, or are not, a heretic to holy Church. I only remember that you are a stranger, that I brought you hither, and that I will save you if I can. Begone."

"I am no heretic, my lord," said Cervantes, passionately. "I saw a fellow-creature barbarously murdered. I know not even what wild words I uttered ; but I am no heretic !"

The young cardinal waved his hand.

"Go," he said. "Go, without a moment's delay. Let Naples be your destination. There are Spanish forces there, and under the Spanish banners you are safe. Farewell."

Cervantes kissed the hand of his patron, and obeyed. By midnight he had already left Rome far behind him, and was galloping along the moonlit Campagna with his face turned towards the sea.

CHAPTER XII.

Cervantes becomes acquainted with a new city, and renews his intercourse with an old friend.

A FISHING barque, rising and dipping with every wave, and scudding gaily before the wind, rounded the point of Pozzuoli one sunny autumnal afternoon, some four or five days after the events last related, and made straight for the port of Naples. On the deck of this slight vessel, with head erect, and arms resolutely folded across his breast, stood Cervantes. He had fled, unpursued, to Ostia, a seaport town about sixteen miles from Rome, where the Tiber flows into the Mediterranean, and there hired the first boat that he could find to convey him to Naples. Now, bluer than the blue sky overhead, that loveliest of European bays lay stretched before him. Yonder, creeping down to the very ripples on the yellow beach, and rising, tier above tier, upon the hill-sides till surmounted at last by stately fortresses, extended far and wide the glittering city. To the right, crowned with a feathery plume of grey vapour, rose the summit of Vesuvius. There were vines on all the hills; sombre groves of chest-

nuts and laurels, in the valleys between ; tiny islands of steep rock and blossoming verdure dotting the blue waters far away ; and hundreds of boats, with coloured sails and gay flags, skimming hither and thither, like sea-birds on the wing. As the barque drew nearer and nearer, following the curve of the shore, Cervantes could see the fishers clustered on the beach mending their nets, and the vintagers on the terraced heights pruning the vines. Well might he hold his breath, and gaze as if he feared the scene must presently dissolve before his eyes ! It was then, as it is now, the fairest, the rarest, of Southern Europe. A modern poet, writing of it with the enthusiasm of a painter, asks,—

This region, surely, is not of the earth ;
Was it not dropt from heaven ? Not a grove,
Citron, or pine, or cedar, not a grot
Sea-worn and mantled with the gadding vine,
But breathes enchantment.

One of the first sights that met the eyes of Cervantes on nearing the quays, was his own national flag—almost one of the first sounds that met his ears on landing, was his own dear Spanish tongue. Yes, there were Spanish galleons at anchor in the harbour ; Spanish sailors lounging over the gunwales ; Spanish soldiers loitering about the steep streets, and pledging

one another in Italian wine at the doors of the wine-shops. Here, though so many leagues from Madrid, was home again ; for Naples at that time, and long before and long after that time, was a dependency of the Spanish crown. Here Philip of Spain was king. Yonder, frowning high above the town on its impregnable rock, rose the Castle of St. Elmo, built by Charles the Fifth to overawe his Neapolitan subjects. Lower down, level with the city and the sea, stood the Castle Nuovo, bristling with guns. Over both floated haughtily the Spanish eagle.

That night Cervantes slept at a hostelry on the quay of Santa Lucia, and the next morning waited upon the Governor of Castle Nuovo, to report himself as a Spanish subject, and seek information of such of his countrymen as might then be in Naples. Almost the first person whom he encountered on coming out from the governor's presence was a young officer lounging against the battlements, who looked at him earnestly, followed him across the courtyard, seized him by both hands, and called him by his name.

“ Miguel de Cervantes ? ”

“ What, Manuel ! old friend, is it you ? ”

The young men had not met for years. When Cervantes went to Salamanca, Manuel was sent to Cordova. Since then, having completed his education,



Cervantes at Naples.

he had entered the army, and for the last eighteen months had been quartered with his regiment in Naples. It was a joyous meeting for both ; for they had been loving playmates in boyhood, were natives of the same town, and had many early associations in common. Besides all this, they were both far from home ; and to meet a dear friend in a foreign land is a delight that can only be known to those who have travelled and lived among strangers.

They grasped each other's hands as if they never meant to unclasp them again ; they asked twenty questions in a breath ; they even, according to the touching, simple fashion of three centuries ago, kissed each other on the bronzed cheek, like brothers. Then, arm in arm, they went up towards the hill of San Martino, and strolled for hours to and fro in the shady ravine leading to the convent of the Certosa. Here they talked of all that had happened to each since they parted, of their hopes for the future, and of those ambitions that lie nearest to the heart of aspiring youth. Manuel, light-hearted and pleasure-loving, described in glowing language the amusements and novelties of Naples. He praised the climate, the wines, the dark-eyed beauties of the viceregal court, the fishing-excursions, the horse-races, the festivals, and the public entertainments that abounded at all

seasons in that joyous capital. Cervantes told stories of Salamanca ; gave his friend a vivid picture of his journey to Italy, and his experience of Roman life ; and explained how he had been obliged to abandon the service of Cardinal Aquaviva.

"And thy plans for the future, Miguel?" asked Manuel, when Cervantes paused at length in his narration.

"Plans? Nay, what plans can I have, being a fugitive with scarce fifty gold pieces in my purse?"

"But what dost thou think to do in Naples? Tell me, that I may at least endeavour to aid thee, if I can."

Cervantes laughed as carelessly as if half Italy belonged to him.

"*Amigo*," said he, "I can write plays or pastorals, sermons or sonnets, for whoever will buy them. I can turn player, or soldier, or courtier. If it comes to the worst, I can buy a net and a fishing-boat, and seek a salt livelihood out in the blue bay over yonder. Pshaw, with brains, hands, a pen, and a sword, no brave fellow need fear the future!"

By this time, the extreme heat of the afternoon had abated, a cool air blew off the sea, and the declining sunlight shot in long level beams between the branches of the pines and chestnuts, and glittered on the gilded

vanes of the monastery on the hill. Slowly they retraced their steps. As they descended the hill, all Naples lay at their feet. The shore, the quays, the public gardens, were crowded with nobles and peasants, soldiers, beggars, fishermen, ecclesiastics, ladies, and servants in livery. Heavy gilded coaches, drawn by four and six mules each, rude country carts, and riders on horseback, poured backwards and forwards on the long road between the city and the sea. Here, in a vineyard by the road-side, were a couple of rustics dancing to the music of a pipe and tabor, surrounded by a circle of gazers. Down yonder, on the beach, was a crowd of fishermen listening to a black-robed priest mounted on a chair and preaching vociferously. A little farther on they came to another crowd, in the midst of which a brown, ragged, half-naked fellow, with a cracked ghittern under his arm, was reciting or inventing a poetical romance in an interminable number of verses. Rich and poor, old and young, Italian and Spanish, were alike bent on enjoyment; and Manuel told Cervantes that as the sun went down the whole population turned out thus in joyous thousands every day.

Presently they met a group of young Spanish officers, to whom Manuel introduced his friend; and they all went together to a garden roofed in with

vines and creeping plants, overlooking the bay, where they ate delicious cakes, and sweetmeats made of snow and sugar, artfully coloured and moulded into quaint devices, and pledged each other in cups of iced Italian wine. Here they sat, chatting and laughing and singing, till the twilight came on and the moon rose, and the smoke glowed red above the summit of Vesuvius. Then one of the young men proposed that they should take Cervantes to see a performance of puppets ; and so they rose and went through several narrow streets in the heart of the city, till they came to a temporary building, more like a great shed than a theatre, where for a few small coins they were admitted. The room was full of people, most of them standing, and at the upper end rose a rough platform, lighted by a row of oil lamps, and hung at the back with a faded green curtain in the place of scenery. While the audience was assembling, songs were sung behind the stage ; but every one talked, and no one listened, till the bell rang for the performance to begin.

And a most curious, comical performance it was ! The actors were all dolls about three feet in height, which moved about by means of wires and strings, and flung their arms and legs into all kinds of spasmodic attitudes. The piece they played was called "The Two Noble Lovers," and was founded on a story

written some thirty or forty years before by a gentleman of Vicenza named Luigi da Porta. This story was the history of Romeo and Juliet ; and though not published till after the death of the author, in 1535, was already so popular that it had been thrice printed in Venice, adapted into French, and translated into English, both in prose and verse. Shakspeare had not yet written his tragedy on the same subject. He was but a little boy at this time, living in his father's house at Stratford-on-Avon, going to the free school every day, and playing in Sir Thomas Lucy's park on holiday afternoons.

Here, then, was "Romeo and Juliet" dramatized and acted, while Shakspeare was a child far away in England ; and Cervantes, a young man of three-and-twenty, sat, a looker-on, in this puppet-theatre at Naples, *anno Domini* 1569. Here Romeo, ludicrously dressed in scraps of velvet and tinsel, squeaked under Juliet's window, ran a wooden Tybalt through the body, and took poison with such intensity of purpose that his head rebounded upon the stage with a double rap that echoed through the theatre like a modern postman's knock. Here Juliet, who was a very pretty doll, with great glass eyes and a flaxen wig, acted so pathetically, that half the audience (that is to say the women and children) were in tears. Here, too, were

the elder Capulets and Montagues, and the servants, who had a great battle on the stage, and all kinds of other personages, such as Cupid, Mars, Bacchus, and Jupiter, who, although they did not exactly belong to the story, came on between the acts, and discoursed together somewhat obscurely, though to the evident satisfaction of the spectators.

At length, when Romeo, and Juliet, and Paris, and some few supernumeraries, were all dead, Jupiter came on in a chariot and made a final speech, and the play ended. Then the audience dispersed, and Cervantes walked back to his inn by moonlight, accompanied by Manuel and his brother officers; and they all parted merrily, with the promise of meeting again on the morrow.

CHAPTER XIII.

A passage from the Georgics.

WEEK after week went by, and Cervantes, although his gold pieces were fast melting away, could not help confessing that Naples was the most delightful place in the world—"a piece of heaven dropped down upon earth," as an Italian poet has it. Manuel, and Manuel's brother officers, did all in their power to make it agreeable to him ; and what with excursions to the neighbouring towns and the islands off the coast ; and what with buffalo-baitings, religious festivals, boatings by moonlight, supper-parties, and so forth, the days slipped by so fast that he had no time to count them.

The weather at this season was extremely hot, and the young men often started on these pleasure-parties late in the evening, and sailed, or rode, to their destination by moonlight. They then rested all the sultry morning, and came back again to Naples the next night, or the night after, taking the red light above Vesuvius for their beacon, and accompanied all the way, if it were by land, by myriads of glittering fire-

flies, that flitted and whirled about like living sparks, or little fairy-torches. One day they went to visit the tomb of Virgil, at Pausilippo, an ancient sepulchre shaded by a laurel planted by Petrarch. Another day was devoted to seeing the ruins of the Palace of Tiberius at Capri, and the famous grotto, which they entered in a little boat through a low rocky arch opening on the sea. The interior of this grotto was bathed in one intense, tender blue light. The blue waves paved it in every direction, and flowed away, darker and deeper in hue, among its remotest corridors and arches. The roof, all glittering with pendent crystals, caught back the blue of the waves. The rocky walls, the air, the very fish darting under the boat's keel among the broken rocks below, were blue and clear as sapphire. Cervantes and Manuel were alone that day, with only a single boatman, and they read Virgil aloud to each other as they glided gently back to Naples across the bay.

On another occasion they made a pilgrimage to Cicero's villa, and the grotto of the Cumæan Sibyl, who so puzzled Tarquin II. by burning the books of oracles. On another, they went to see the boiling lake of Agnano, and the sulphur plain of Solfatura. On another, the famous breakwater called the Mole of Hadrian. In short, Manuel took care that his friend

should miss none of the natural beauties or classic antiquities round about Naples; although many of the latter, with which we are all familiar now, at least by name, had not then been discovered. Pæstum, with its two magnificent temples older than the monuments of Rome, was yet unknown to any but the obscure fishers of the Gulf of Salerno. Herculaneum and Pompeii still lay buried beneath the Vesuvian lava by which they were destroyed 1,500 years before; and vineyards flourished above their unsuspected ruins.

There came one day, however, when our hero had the good fortune to behold a grander sight than any he had yet seen.

The friends had gone a few miles out of Naples one balmy October afternoon, in the direction of Pozzuoli, to witness the festivities of the *Vendemmia*, or vintage. There they saw the vintagers tread out the last grapes in the wine-presses with their naked feet, and then form into a triumphal harvest-home procession; for it was the last day of grape-gathering, and they were going down into the town to spend the evening in dancing and feasting.

First of all came a bronzed, handsome fellow, crowned with grapes and vine-leaves, to represent Bacchus. He carried a staff twined with ivy in his

hand, and wore a sheepskin thrown across his shoulders, spotted with red grape-juice, to look like the panther-skin of the Roman god. Next came women with baskets of grapes upon their heads; little chubby brown boys, like sunburnt Cupids, with great bunches of grapes in their hands; a long train of carts full of the piled fruit, both white and purple; some fifteen or twenty young men with blazing torches, made of the resinous pine-wood; then an equal number of young women, singing and dancing; and, last of all, followed by some boys with cow-horns and tambourines, a fat jovial-looking old vintager, crowned with leaves, smeared with juice, and riding on an ass to perform the part of Silenus.

"Who taught you how to arrange this procession?" asked Cervantes, turning to one of the men.

"No one taught us, signore," replied the peasant. "We always have it thus at the end of the grape-harvest."

"But who told you about Bacchus and Silenus? How know you that Bacchus should wear a spotted skin, and Silenus ride upon an ass?"

"Nay," interposed one of the girls, "our fathers dressed them so, and their fathers before them."

"Then it is an old custom among you?"

"As old," said the first speaker, "as the ruins down

yonder." And he pointed to the sea-washed fragments of the Bridge of Caligula, that rose like sunken rocks out from the calm waters of the bay down below.

"A fine answer," said Cervantes, in Spanish, to his friend; "and a true one, beyond question. Centuries have done little to change this ancient people. As Virgil painted them, so they are still—children of the sun and sea. Have we not here a living page out of the *Georgics*?"

They fell in with the rear of the procession, and followed the vintagers down the hill-side to a green open place just outside the village, where the *festa* was to be held. Here tables were spread under the trees, and a plentiful feast of eggs, maccaroni, goat's-flesh, cakes made from Indian corn, dried and fresh fruits, lemonade, iced water, and new wine tied up in skins, was prepared for all who chose to eat and be merry. Then Miguel and Manuel sat down and pledged the honest folks in country wine, and, by-and-by, danced a *tarantella* with the girls; joining as merrily in the mirth as if they had been Italians themselves. At length, as the dusk gathered closer, and the fire-flies began to flit in and out of the trees, they flung a handful of silver coins into a cup, and wished the merry-makers farewell. The vintagers

shouted their thanks ; Bacchus followed them to the stable where their horses were waiting ; Silenus ran after them with a parting bumper ; and the women watched them down the road, as if they were old friends.

"*Addio, signori !*" repeated old and young, as long as the strangers remained in sight.

"*Addio, amici !*" replied Miguel and Manuel, looking back, and waving their hands till the turn of the road carried them beyond sight and hearing.

"They are a friendly race," said Miguel, thoughtfully. "Methinks we Spaniards would feel somewhat less kindly to a race of conquerors !"

Manuel laid his hand suddenly upon his companion's bridle, and, without replying to his observation, pointed to an opening between the trees.

"Do you see nothing ?" he said, breathlessly.

"I see only the trees and the rocks."

"Nay—yonder, there—through that opening ?"

"Yes ; I see a light ; but what of that ? A bonfire, perhaps, in celebration of some vintage feast."

"A bonfire, say you ?" repeated Manuel excitedly ; "such a bonfire, if I am not strangely mistaken, as neither you nor I may ever see again ! See ! see how it gains every moment in volume—how it reddens all the sky ! Miguel, I tell thee, 'tis an eruption of Vesuvius !"

"An eruption of Vesuvius!" repeated Cervantes, scarcely believing what he heard.

At that moment they rounded another angle of the road, and the scene lay before them. At their feet the moonlighted bay and the sleeping city; beyond both the great volcano, surmounted by a quivering column of brilliant fire that fell over at the top in a widening shower, like a slender wheatsheaf or an Indian palm. Presently a low terrible sound, like gathering thunder, reverberated through the silence. The breeze died away. The young men held their breathing and gazed silently in one another's faces. Then, suddenly, as if at a preconcerted signal, they put spurs to their horses, and dashed away at full speed towards Naples.

CHAPTER XIV.

The terrible mountain.

THE two young Spaniards rode down into Naples as fast as their tired beasts could carry them, and having there exchanged them for fresh ones, started at once for Vesuvius. They found the whole city awake and in motion, the beach crowded with gazers, and the Portici road already thronged. Long before they reached the flourishing little town of Torre del Greco, they found themselves enveloped in drifting clouds of fine ashes. The ground trembled every now and then beneath their feet. A hollow murmuring, like the distant roar of a troubled sea, filled the air continuously, and was interrupted at intervals by loud explosions, like the discharge of a battery of heavy cannon. At Resina, where they left their horses, and took a guide up the mountain, they found the villagers on their knees outside the chapel in the market-place ; and at Torre del Greco they met scores of these poor people, men, women, and even little children, hurrying away towards the open country with baskets of grapes, which till now had hung

ripening in the mountain vineyards, and bundles of the poles to which the vines were bound.

Soon the red light grew fiercer, and through the dense smoke that lay above, over the summit of the mountain, they discerned, rising higher and even higher, the fiery fountain which they had seen from Pozzuoli. They were ascending now, at every step, and the grey ashes lay so thick beneath their feet that each tread left an impression, like a footmark on snow. On either side of the steep path lay flourishing vineyards; some lately stripped and harvested, others bending beneath masses of rich white and purple grapes, ready for gathering. Amongst these the dust had already drifted in great mounds, and in some places had smothered the vines completely. Even here, the peasants were running wildly to and fro, saving what they could, and lamenting the destruction of their fertile fields.

"It was all we had!" cried a poor woman, pointing to a small enclosure, which, from its low-lying position, was already half buried. "We shall never plant nor reap in it more!"

Cervantes gave her a coin from his scanty purse, and hurried on. His kind heart ached for the despair of these poor, beggared country folks.

They push on—they round a shoulder of rock that

stands between them and the light—they find themselves on a kind of natural terrace, overhanging a deep ravine or valley, about half a mile in width, on the other side of which rises a black perpendicular mass extending upwards into the immeasurable darkness, and crowned with fire and smoke.

Having gazed for a long time upon this amazing sight, first from one point of view and then another, the friends retraced their steps, and reached the foot of Vesuvius just as the dawn was breaking behind the eastward mountains. Naples and Portici were still wide awake; and for one person returning, like themselves, from the scene of destruction, they met a hundred hastening out to witness it. By these, rich or poor, afoot or on horseback, they were stopped and questioned every minute.

“You come from the mountain, signors?”

“Is it a fine eruption?”

“Does the lava threaten Resina, or Torre del Greco?”*

“Is much damage done to the vines?”

“Can one go near the top with safety?”

To these questions, and hundreds of similar ones, Miguel and Manuel replied with what brief civility

* This town was utterly destroyed by the subsequent eruption of 1794.

they could ; for they were fairly knocked up by the heat, and the long night's excitement. Near Portici, they saw a poor family sitting by the wayside, with some few of their household goods about them. The children were playing carelessly. The mother was sobbing. The father sat in silent despair, with his face buried in his hands. The aged grandmother, leaning on a blackened staff, stood looking back at the terrible mountain under its canopy of smoke and fire.

"My poor people," said Manuel, compassionately, "are you also sufferers?"

The man looked up, and was about to speak ; but the old woman interposed.

"Silence, my son," she said, in a shrill quavering voice. "Dost thou not see he is an accursed Spaniard?"

Then, turning upon the young men like an ancient prophetess—"Begone!" she cried. "It is you who have brought this destruction upon us! You conquer us, you enslave us, you triumph over us, and the very hills make war against you! Begone, ere the sea pours in, and the ground opens under your feet! See yonder! See the fire from hell, pouring forth to devour you? It comes not in vain. It tells of more war, more bloodshed, more woe! War! War! Woe! Woe, and bloodshed!"

And, carried away by the fervour of prophecy, the old woman threw up her withered arms, as if invoking curses from Heaven.

Manuel crossed himself devoutly, and rode off. Cervantes laughed, and, looking round at the turn of the road, waved his hand in gay defiance.

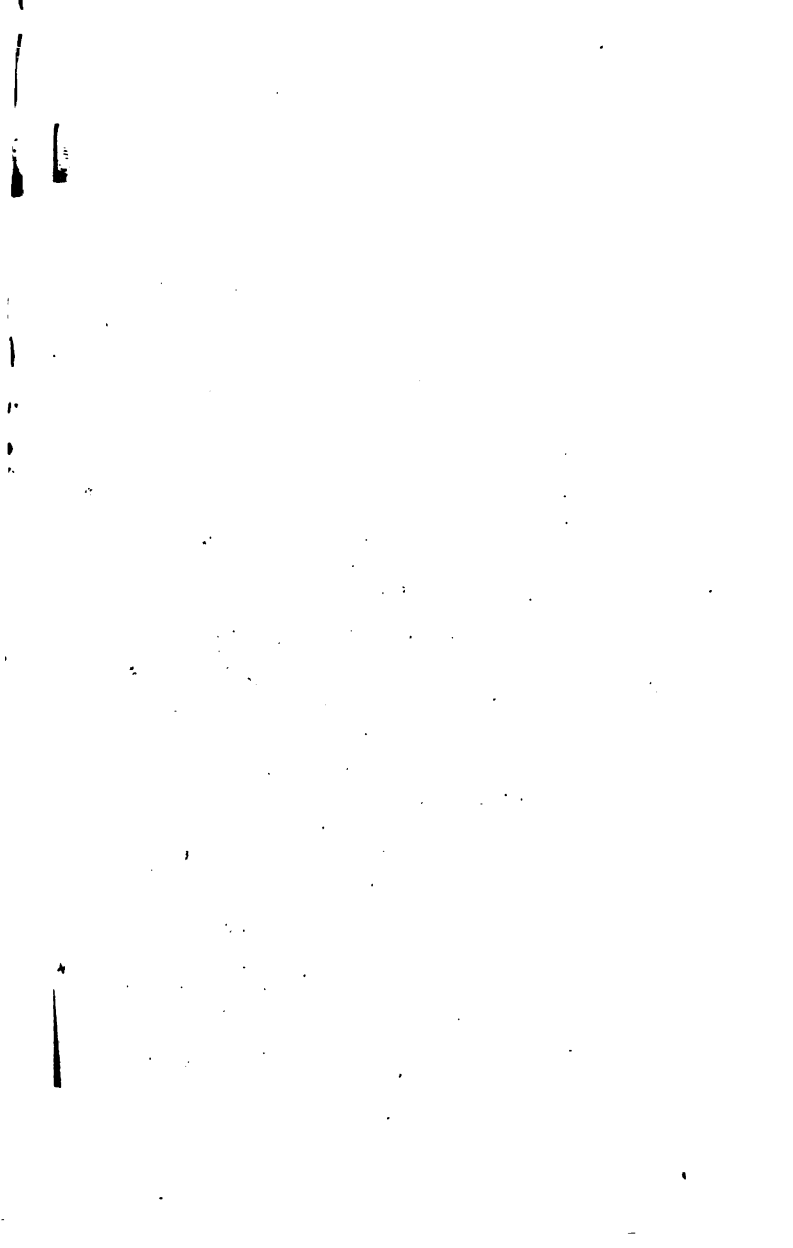
"A murrain on the spiteful beldame!" said he. "She is shaking her staff at us, like an old Hecate!"

"Nay, mock her not, Miguel," expostulated his more superstitious friend. "She hath, perchance, the gift of prophecy."

"Then she hath a most illogical gift," retorted Cervantes. "'Tis upon themselves, poor souls, that yonder Tartarus makes war; and not on us! 'Tis they who are chased from their little homesteads; not we from St. Elmo! 'Tis their harvests that are blighted—not our conquests that are wrested from us! Pshaw, Manuel, methought thou wert more reasonable than to think twice upon an old woman's ravings!"

But Manuel only shook his head, and said:

"Laugh as thou wilt, Miguel—my mind misgives me that we shall hear troublous tidings ere long."







Near Portici,—Smoke and Fire.



CHAPTER XV.

Sword promoted, *vice* Pen superseded.

THOSE troublous tidings chanced to be not far distant.

One sunny October morning, as Cervantes was sitting, somewhat dolefully, in the humble attic which was then his lodging, with a sheet of accounts and an almost empty purse before him, the door was flung suddenly open, and Manuel burst into the room.

"News! news!" cried he. "Spain has entered into an alliance with Venice and Rome against the Turks, and twenty of our galleys are ordered to quit Naples for the Levant within ten days!"

"Only twenty!" exclaimed Cervantes. "Nay, then, our succour is too scanty, and comes too late! We have been much to blame this whole summer long. We have stood idly by, while the infidel wrested Cyprus from the Venetian government. We have suffered the sack of Nicosia, the massacre of twenty thousand Christian souls, and the reduction of Famagosta.* Now the mischief is done, and we cannot repair it."

* See a brief and interesting summary of the descent upon Cyprus in vol. xxxii. of Murray's "Family Library."

"But we can avenge it!" said Manuel.

"With twenty galleys?"

"Not with twenty alone. Forty-seven more are to be sent from Barcelona; and it is said that five thousand of our soldiers are to be spared at once from the garrisons here in Naples."

"Thy regiment is sure to be ordered out, Manuel," observed Cervantes, thoughtfully.

"In good faith, we hope so!" replied the young officer, joyously. "We are longing for service. Naples is a paradise; but soldiers love to season Paradise itself with the flavour of gunpowder, now and then;" Cervantes smiled at his enthusiasm.

"Thy commander, Miguel de Monçada, is so brave a soldier," said he, "that his regiment will surely not be left idle in time of war. Methinks I shall volunteer into its ranks myself, and have a shot at the Turks in thy good company!"

"What!—turn soldier?" exclaimed Manuel, opening his eyes.

"Why not? There lie my last three gold pieces; and, when they are melted, where shall I find more?"

"But thy talent for poetry——"

"Will never bring me one talent of silver!*

* The silver talent of Rome was a sum equivalent to about £75 sterling.

Pshaw, Manuel ! I have no mind to starve on literature, like a rat in a record-chest. I am too proud to turn mendicant ; too fond of the things of this world to turn monk ; too vagabond by nature ever again to turn courtier. Thou seest I am compelled, in mere self-defence, to don the king's livery ! ”

“ If thou art really in earnest,” began Manuel, radiant with pleasure, “ I shall hail this day's news as the best —— ”

“ I am so much in earnest,” interrupted Cervantes, snatching up his hat, “ that I will go with thee at once to the governor, and offer myself as a volunteer in thine own company of thine own regiment. Long live King Philip ! ”

“ Long live King Philip ! ” shouted Manuel, waving his cap for joy. And away went the two young friends to the Castle Nuovo, where Cervantes took the oaths, and was measured for his uniform. That afternoon he wrote a long letter to his parents, telling them of all his late changes of fortune, and his determination to earn his bread by the sword, since he found he could not earn it by the pen ; and in the evening he supped merrily with Manuel and some of his brother officers, at a little banquet to which they invited him, in honour of his new profession.

CHAPTER XVI.

Trials of patience.

IF Cervantes hoped that he had only to swear allegiance to King Philip in order at once to taste the excitement of a soldier's life, he soon found himself not a little mistaken. Instead of starting in ten days for the Levant, the galleys continued to lie week after week and month after month at anchor in the Bay of Naples. From time to time there came rumours of action; but these died away as fast as they were promulgated, and nothing came of them. In the meantime Cervantes had to go through a minor purgatory of drilling. He was taught to hold his head up, and turn his toes out, and walk with his knees stiff, and keep his arms flat to his sides. He learned to march, to shoot with the arquebuse, and fight with the cutlass. He also had to endure an iron morion on his head, and jackboots on his feet, and a heavy coat of hard buff-leather strapped in at the throat and waist till he could hardly breathe, with a steel cuirass outside it, front and back, weighing about twenty pounds in solid metal,—none of which were very pleasant in a

climate where the thermometer stands at 80 deg. in the sun in the month of December. He felt, however, that he was doing his best to earn his livelihood after an honest, manly fashion ; and that knowledge helped to lighten many a discomfort.

At length, when Christmas had come and gone, there came despatches from Madrid, commanding the immediate fitting-out of the twenty galleys. The commotion in the Neapolitan garrisons was great. . . . Flags were hoisted ; guns were fired ; ammunition and arms were transported from the forts to the vessels ; the soldiers were doubly drilled ; and the officers shook hands over their wine, and flattered themselves they were going to fight the Turks immediately.

Nothing of the kind : they were only packed on board the galleys, with as strict an economy regarding space, and as liberal a consideration for their personal convenience, as we may generally see displayed in the packing of a barrellful of oysters, and drafted off to Otranto,—a dreary seaport on the east coast of Italy, to which they could have marched overland with ease in less than a week, but which it took them eighteen days to reach by sea, in the teeth of a contrary wind.

Here, in comfortless quarters, with nothing to do, nothing to see, and none of the luxuries and delights

of Naples, they spent their time in grumbling at the government, practising at a mark with pistol and arquebuse, quail-shooting, and fishing. As for Cervantes, he occasionally scribbled a verse or two ; but neither the time, nor the place, nor the way of life, was much calculated to stimulate his literary tastes.

At the expiration of another dismal month or so, Otranto was enlivened by the arrival of forty-nine Venetian galleys, commanded by Juan Andrea Doria, and, later still, by a reinforcement of troops and galleys from the Papal States. More Spaniards, too, were daily expected, and it was rumoured that the allies were to assemble in all their strength at Messina, in the month of May ; there to be united under the supreme command of Don Juan of Austria, a Spanish general, half-brother to King Philip, and natural son of the Emperor Charles V.

However, May came and went, and June and July both lagged slowly by, and it was not till the second week in August, 1571, that the allied fleet moved out of the port of Otranto, and joined the additional Spanish contingent at Messina, in Sicily. They passed the southern headlands of the Italian coast, and entered the straits of Messina on a glorious, golden August afternoon. Cervantes stood on the

poop of a Spanish galley, and surveyed the scene on either hand. To the right lay Italy, to the left Sicily, with the city of Messina rising, palace above palace, fort above fort, height above height, in the brilliant sunshine. Moored in the great harbour, with the Spanish flag floating at every masthead, lay the forty-seven war-galleys brought hither by Don Juan of Austria. The fleets saluted each other ; the forts greeted them with repeated discharges of heavy cannon ; and far and wide rose the shouts of the populace on the shore, and the fishermen in their decorated barques.

Once united at Messina, the allies made rapid preparations for action. Don Juan had brought with him Don Miguel de Monçada, the famous colonel of Manuel's and Cervantes' regiment, and the whole distinguished regiment of Don Lope de Figueroa ; both of whom had won renown in the wars of Grenada. These commanders now busily employed themselves in reviewing and disciplining their troops, and distributing them in the several ships of war. Thus it happened that Cervantes and Manuel, with their captain and company, consisting of two hundred men in all, were allotted to a galley called the *Marquesa*, commanded by Captain Francisco Sancto Pietro.

In these preparations, the last weeks of August and the first weeks of September flew quickly by ; and then the great armament, consisting of two hundred war galleys and a hundred transports, set sail for Corfu, where they hoped to learn tidings of the Turkish fleet. At Corfu they put into harbour for a day or two. It was a dismal little island, with a narrow harbour, and a curious old town rising round it in the form of an amphitheatre. Here they learned that the Turkish fleet under Ali Pacha, the Ottoman admiral, was lying somewhere in the Gulf of Lepanto. A great cry of exultation ran from ship to ship, and sailors and soldiers alike rejoiced in anticipation of the struggle near at hand.

In the midst, however, of the general joy, as the evening dusk came on, and music echoed from deck to deck throughout the fleet, and every galley hung out many-coloured lanterns, Cervantes sought Manuel alone, and leading him apart from the rest, said,—

“Comrade and friend, I much fear that a great misfortune is about to befall me.”

“What meanest thou ?” cried Manuel, startled by the despondency of his tone. “Surely, thou hast no presentiment of the coming battle ?” Cervantes shook his head, and smiled sadly.

“Feel my hand,” said he. Manuel felt it, and

found that, notwithstanding the overpowering heat of the evening, his friend's palm was damp and cold as snow.

"Santa Maria!" he exclaimed, "thou art ill!"

"Indeed, I fear so," replied Cervantes, resting wearily against a gun-carriage. "My head swims, and at times I see nothing distinctly. Now I am cold, like ice; a few moments ago I burned like fire."

"Alas! alas!" said Manuel, the tears starting to his kind eyes, "I will go seek the surgeon. Hast thou pain in any part?"

"The bitterest of all pain—the sting of disappointment," said Miguel, bitterly. "Good Heavens! am I doomed to lie sick and helpless, while other men are fighting?"

"Nay, think not of that," expostulated Manuel. "Go to thy cabin and be still, while I fetch the surgeon to thee."

"Be still?" echoed Cervantes, fiercely. "How can I be still?—I, who would have given my right hand for a soldier's share in the glory!"

But even as he said the words he turned lividly pale, and, had it not been for Manuel's ready arm would have fallen on the deck.

CHAPTER XVII.

The battle of Lepanto.

It was daybreak, on the 7th of October, 1571, when the Christian and Mahomedan fleets drew up before each other in battle array. Far and wide, their sails extended from Cape Kologria to Missolonghi on the one side, and, on the other, from the entrance to the Bay of Corinth to the far-famed promontory of Actium, where Anthony and Augustus fought that great battle by which the fate of Rome was decided sixteen hundred years before.

The enemies were tolerably equal in numbers,* and both were eager for the struggle. No sooner were the Turkish sails discovered than Don Juan of Austria displayed the Standard of the League, fired a signal gun, and, ordering out his own shallop, rowed all along the lines from galley to galley, urging and encouraging the soldiers, issuing directions to

* The allies are said by Contarini to have mustered 214 sail, and the Turks 275 ; "but six galleasses of the Venetians, from their great size and the superiority of their guns, reduced this excess of the enemy in positive numbers very nearly to equality. —"Family Library," vol. xxxii.

the captains, stimulating the pride of the gunners, promising honours to those who distinguished themselves, and glory to those who might fall. He even restored all the Christian galley-slaves to liberty throughout the fleet, and caused weapons to be distributed to them as to the other fighting-men. The decks were then cleared; the priests went round, crucifix in hand, preaching, as in the times of the old crusaders; the vessels were dressed with flags, streamers, and bandrols; and the whole armament advanced with admirable precision to the sound of military music.

First of all came six huge Venetian galleasses, and, about half a mile behind them, the main line, covering a surface of nearly four miles in length. The right wing was commanded by Doria; the left by an Italian nobleman, named Barbarigo; and the centre by Don Juan himself, supported on either hand by Colonna, the papal general, and Veniero, the Venetian commander. No vessel in all that fleet carried fewer than two hundred men on board, armed, some with arquebuses and halberts, some with iron maces and pikes, and others with swords, pistols, and poniards. Some of the flag-ships held three and even four hundred soldiers, besides rowers and gunners; and the gunners, in addition to their pieces

of ordnance, were provided with grenades and artificial fire-pots.

And now, as the allied fleet moved majestically on, solemn yet jubilant, with the men all armed and silent crowding the decks, and no sound heard save the dashing of the oars, the beating of the drums, and the clangour of trumpets and clarions, a great spirit of goodwill towards each other, and defiance towards the enemy, ran through the ranks of the soldiers. Those who had been private foes shook hands, and were reconciled. Those who were friends embraced each other, knowing that it might be for the last time in this world.

And still the shaven priests glided hither and thither, and the trumpets lifted up their brazen voices, and the two great armaments advanced slowly towards each other under the noonday sun. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, they drew nearer and nearer, and the Christians, having the sun behind them, could discern the standards, surmounted with crescents, and the turbaned heads of the Turks.

Then Don Juan's galley hoisted a rapid signal, and the six advanced galeasses, halting and veering half round, so as to present a long double line of port-holes, delivered a tremendous broadside in the very teeth of the enemy.

While the thunder of the guns was yet reverberating in the air, and before the smoke had begun to drift off, a gentleman volunteer, who had been for some days sick of the ague in a cabin of the galley *Marquesa*, sprang from his bed, seized his hat and cuirass, buckled on his sword with hands that shook from fever, and, though scarcely strong enough to stand without support, staggered upon deck, and made his way towards a party of officers on the fore-castle.

"Oh, Miguel! what dost thou here?" cried Manuel, the youngest among them.

"Senor Cervantes," said another, a tall, grave-looking personage, with a cross of honour on his breast, "you were best in your cabin at a time like this."

"Not so!" exclaimed Cervantes, with his hand upon the hilt of his broadsword. "While I have strength to draw this in his cause—while I have a life to spend in his service—my place is among the king's soldiers!"

"Your place is on the sick man's pallet, Senor Cervantes," replied the commander, sternly.

"Nay, captain," pleaded Miguel, his pale face flushing with eagerness, "I beseech you, suffer me, at least, to die as becomes a good soldier. At this moment, I feel I have the strength of ten?"

"It is the strength of fever, *amigo*," interposed Manuel.

"Then, in God's name, let it be so!" cried Cervantes. "Whether the strength be of fever or of health, what boots it, since I am able to deal a stroke or two upon the infidel? Good Captain Sansisteban, I knew your son at Salamanca: for his sake, grant me some post of danger, where I may fight and fall for King Philip!"

"'Fore Heaven, then, as thou art a gallant spirit, so I will," said the captain, with a great oath and a pleased smile. "Ho, there! twelve pikemen for Senor Cervantes."

Cervantes wrung the commander's proffered hand, whispered "God bless thee, Manuel, should we meet no more," and rushed to take the lead of his little company.

And now the battle began in earnest. The Turks miscalculating the numbers opposed to them, and believing that the galleys carried guns only on their forecastles, bore down fearlessly, and exposed themselves to a raking fire. Volley after volley, broadside after broadside, opened upon them with deadly precision. The sun shone in their eyes. Even the wind was against them, and carried the smoke full in their faces. Shattered, disordered, leaving some of

their number lying on the waters in helpless ruin, and having seen others sunk and split to pieces, with all hands on board, the first Turkish squadron fell back, and a great shout ran from galley to galley throughout the allied fleet. At the same time, a second squadron, commanded by Admiral Mahomet Siroco, governor of Alexandria, tacked round between Don Juan's left wing and the shore, and attacked the division commanded by Andrea Doria. Six Turkish vessels surrounded the galley of the *Proveditore*. The Count Barbarigo fell, mortally wounded in the eye by an arrow. Nani, his second in command, repulsed five of the galleys and captured the sixth. Suddenly, alone and unsupported, the *Marquesa* singled out the famous galley of Mahomet Siroco—a galley described by an old historian* as being thrice the size of any of the others, with a deck of inlaid walnut wood, and a cabin decorated with ornaments of gold, silver, and precious stones. On board this galley, surrounded by his principal officers, with his ensign-bearer at his left hand carrying the great standard, stood the admiral. Up came the little galley *Marquesa*, in the teeth of a cloud of arrows, and, delivering first one broadside

* "History of the Turks." Richard Knolles.

and then another, grappled with the Turkish ship before the smoke had cleared away to betray how near she was.

First to leap on board of all that gallant crew were Cervantes and his twelve chosen pikemen. They were followed, close and fast, by two hundred others. A desperate hand-to-hand struggle ensued. The Turks, fighting round their admiral to the last, formed in a solid body round the mainmast, inclosing him and his standard bearer in the midst ; but, impeded by their own numbers, they could no longer discharge their arrows, or aim with their fire-arms to any purpose. Rank after rank they were cut down, till Mahomet Siroco himself received a mortal wound, and the last of a crew of five hundred threw down their weapons and cried for quarter. In the meantime, not one ship of that squadron had escaped. A few, which attempted to draw off, were pursued and captured ; others were sunk ; others boarded ; and of the latter, no sooner were their decks gained by the soldiers of the allies than the Christian slaves by whom their oars were manned wielded those very oars for weapons, and turned upon their hated captors.

In the central divisions of the Christian fleet the battle was no less hot, and no less decisive. Don Juan attacked a galley commanded by the Dey of



Cervantes and his Pikemen.

Algiers, captured it after a prolonged combat, and himself fixed the head of its commander on the top of his own mainmast. This ghastly trophy decided the fortune of the day. Thirty Turkish ships simultaneously crowded sail for flight, and a mighty shout of "Victory!" rose up from the Christian fleet.

All was now flight, pursuit, and slaughter. Thousands of Mussulmans, finding escape impossible, leaped into the sea and were drowned. Others went to the bottom with their shattered vessels. The sea was red with blood and covered with floating corpses, and with the shouts of the victors and the thunder of the artillery were mingled the cries and groans of the dying.*

Within one hour after sunset the allied fleet, with all its prizes, was lying safely at anchor in the neighbouring harbour of Petala. Only one division of the Turkish armament had escaped that day. One hundred and thirty Turkish ships of war, with their valuable stores and equipments, were captured. Twelve thousand Christian slaves were rescued from captivity. Four thousand Mussulmans were taken prisoners, and twenty-five thousand were slain. The allies, on their side, had lost only eight thousand

* Contarini, "Hist. della Guerra contra Turchi."

men. So signal a victory had not been achieved by the Christians—so terrible a defeat had not been sustained by the infidels—since the repulse of Solyman the Magnificent before the walls of Vienna, forty-two years before.

And Cervantes ?

Cervantes, who, sick and feeble as he was, had been the first to board the admiral's galley,—who had led the fight wherever it was thickest,—and who, in that day of gallant deeds, had distinguished himself as bravest among the brave, was lying—not dead, thank Heaven !—but wounded and delirious in a cabin of the galley *Marquesa*, with Manuel watching at his bedside. He had received two arquebuse shots in the breast, and one hand was so shattered that the surgeon had found it necessary to amputate it at the wrist.

“He said he would give his right hand for a share in the glory,” said Manuel, sorrowfully, as the poor sufferer moaned and muttered in his delirium.

“I' faith, then, he may thank Fortune for taking only the left one, and not striking too sharp a bargain with him !” laughed the surgeon, to whom one patient was the same as another.

And the left hand it was ; not the right. The right, by God's blessing, was left to fight with again—ay, and to write Don Quixote, to boot !

CHAPTER XVIII.

Cervantes, the soldier.

CERVANTES had gone through the baptism of fire and slaughter, and had now no thought of any life but that of the soldier. A soldier he was, therefore, for some years ; and the events of those years we will now attempt briefly to recount.

After having achieved the great victory of Lepanto, Don Juan of Austria put into Messina for the winter with his Spanish troops ; while the Papal and Venetian fleets retired to their respective coasts. At Messina a splendid triumph awaited the conquerors, and they were received with more than royal honours. At Messina, also, the wounded were drafted into an hospital purposely set aside for their accommodation, and tended by experienced surgeons, at the head of whom was Doctor Gregorio Lopez, formerly physician to the Emperor Charles V. Thus cared for, Cervantes gradually recovered from his ague and his wounds, and enjoyed not only his share of a bounty of thirty thousand ducats, presented by Don Juan to the wounded of the Spanish contingent, but was assigned

the sum of three escudos per month, in addition to his pay, as a recognition of his individual valour at the battle of Lepanto. Nor was this all. He was personally distinguished, while in the hospital, by the friendship of the commander-in-chief, and by four several additional grants of money, dated the 15th and 24th of January, and the 9th and 17th March, 1572, "for secret and extraordinary expenses, in consideration of his services, and to complete the cure of his wounds."* He still continued, however, to serve in the ranks as a gentleman-volunteer, and that promotion which, as a man of good birth and refinement, he would have prized far beyond mere money compensation, was, from some unaccountable oversight, withheld.

Shortly after the battle of Lepanto, Cervantes exchanged into the regiment of Don Lope Figueroa. He was unwilling to lose his friend Manuel as a daily comrade; but a more powerful reason influenced him in the other direction. His elder brother, Rodrigo de Cervantes, had been presented with an ensign's commission under Figueroa, and was already on his way to join that regiment in Messina. By the time that he arrived, Miguel had already effected the exchange, and had the happiness of sharing the same

* Roscoe's "Life and Writings of Cervantes."

quarters, wearing the same uniform, and being constantly on the same duties as the brother from whom he had so long been parted. Their joy was great at being again united, for they had not met since a few days before Cervantes started for Rome in the suite of the Prince of Atri.

Having wintered in Messina, and together made the uneventful campaign of the summer of 1572, the brothers spent the next winter (which was the third of Miguel's military career) in Naples. As the spring came on—the spring of 1573—there were rumours afloat that the allies meant this year to turn their arms upon Algiers; but towards the end of March the Venetians contracted a secret peace with Constantinople, the Papal and Spanish commanders threw up the league in disgust, and Don Juan announced his intention of besieging Tunis, and striking a decisive blow at the maritime strongholds of the corsair hordes, which were at this time the terror of the Mediterranean traders.

As they had lagged by in that first spring of 1571, when Cervantes thought the time for action would never come, so the months lagged by again, till the early summer and the midsummer were both past. About the second week in September, the regiments of Monçada and Figueroa were ordered to Palermo;

and on the 24th Don Juan embarked from that city with twenty thousand Spaniards, and set sail for the coast of Africa. On the 8th of October, having been for two days within sight of the long line of sandy plain fringing the bay of Tunis, they made straight for the shore, and disembarked about half-way between the city and the famous fortress called the Goleta. The sky over their heads looked almost black, from the intensity of its colour; the heat was overwhelming; the sun seemed to blaze in the heavens like a fiery furnace; and the plains of sand beyond the low white rocks that fenced the shore gave back its intolerable glare. To the right rose a lofty promontory called Cape Carthage, where the city of Dido once looked out upon the sea. To the left, a mass of white buildings and lofty minarets clustered together in the deep curve of the bay, marked the situation of the Moorish city of Tunis. Here and there, rising in graceful groups at some distance from the shore, were palm-trees and pines; and the cactus and aloe grew rankly in the hollows of the sand-hills, and on the rugged crests of the seaward rocks.

As the galleys dropped anchor, and the troops poured slowly down the gangways in single file, with their steel caps and cuirasses glittering in the sun, a

huge cloud of moving dust was observed towards the south. This cloud, as they shortly discovered, was raised by the simultaneous flight, not only of the Moorish garrison of the Goleta, but of the whole population of the city of Tunis—men, women, children, horses, and flocks. Hastening at once to take possession of these easy conquests, Don Juan garrisoned the Goleta with Spanish troops, took possession of Tunis and its castle, threw up earthworks for the construction of a temporary fort, and gave the city up to pillage. Hither and thither, among the narrow, dirty Moorish lanes of the city—in and out of the bazaars—through the deserted harems and mosques, where no Christian foot had ever been permitted—up to the highest minarets, and down to the wine-cellars where the faithful stored in secret the forbidden liquor, roamed the Spanish soldiery. Day after day, despite the vertical sun, they poured out to sack the deserted capital. Night after night they returned to their tents on the shore, laden with embroidered stuffs, jewels, bags of curious gold and silver money, damaskened scimitars, poniards, rich housings, and sacks of precious spices. Even the officers did not disdain to take their share of the booty; and Cervantes and his brother, remembering their mother and sisters in Alcala de Henares, filled their pockets

with bracelets, and stored away a bundle of shawls and gold-embroidered veils in a certain corner of the hold on board the galley appropriated to their company. As, however, Miguel was a poet and a scholar, as well as a soldier, he gave up one day to seeing the ruins of Carthage.

He, and Manuel, and Rodrigo went together ; for, though Manuel and Miguel were no longer in the same regiment, they still occupied the same quarters, and were despatched on the same expeditions. Leaving the Goleta early in the morning, they mounted three Barbary horses, taken probably from the stables of some bey, or captain of janizaries, in Tunis, and rode along the coast in the direction of Cape Carthage. Coming by-and-by to some salt-pits sunk in the sand, they could distinguish the remains of several stone jetties running out upon the shelving shore to a great distance under the surface of the water ; and in a few minutes more, came upon a mass of irregular ruins, half-overgrown with thickets of the fig and olive, and the rich green leaf of the acanthus. Here they traced the outer circuit of what might have been a theatre, or palace, in the days of Scipio and Hannibal ; and then, ascending higher, arrived at the famous cisterns, the magnitude and number of which are to this day the wonder of African travellers. Far away, scat-

tered here and there along the distant plain, rose the ruined arches of that huge aqueduct which once supplied those cisterns from the springs of Zungar, fifty miles distant. The young soldiers examined these prodigious reservoirs, and descended into the corridor, which anciently connected them one with another. Suddenly, with a hideous cry, a troop of jackals started up before them, and fled into the darkness of the vaulted distance. They climbed back to the upper air. Before and around them lay the blue sea and the Spanish galleys, the long line of sandy bay, the palms, the fort, the distant minarets, and, far away inland, the purple mountains, beyond which stretched the illimitable desert. They picked up a few morsels of green and yellow marble—once, perhaps, part of the columns of a stately temple ; now scattered, thick and shapeless, among the weeds, like pebbles on a beach. As they did so, a large snake glided past them and disappeared in a thicket of young olives, and a flock of starlings, apparently many miles in length, flew, like a cloud, across the dark blue sky.

In the first days of November, having left a force of seven thousand troops in possession of Tunis and the Goleta, Don Juan returned to Sicily ; while Cervantes and Rodrigo were sent, with four companies of Figueroa's regiment, to the island of Sardinia,

where they passed the winter ; Sardinia being at that time a dependency of the Spanish crown.

In the month of May, 1574, while Don Juan was negotiating with his half brother, King Philip of Spain, for the sovereignty of Tunis, and the Moors were silently preparing to recover it by force of arms, Cervantes and his comrades were brought off from Sardinia by a squadron of galleys commanded by Marcello Doria, and drafted on to Genoa, there to await the pleasure of the commander-in-chief. In that superb seaport the brothers remained for three months, visiting at the palaces of many of its merchant-princes, and enjoying the literary society of the city and its environs. In July, however, there came intelligence that the Moors were assembling before Tunis, and in August Don Juan touched at Genoa, took up the four companies of Cervantes' regiment, and pushed on for Messina, where the rest of his fleet lay in harbour. At Messina more delays occurred. Some of the galleys needed repair, and the regiment of Don Pedro di Padillan had not yet arrived from Naples. In the meantime, the Spaniards were besieged in Tunis by an immense army of Moors, and rumour said that the Goleta was already taken. Impatient to rescue his brave soldiers, Don Juan hastened the preparations by day and night, rein-

forced his ships with men and stores, and put to sea in the teeth of a contrary wind. All was, however, in vain. The wind became a hurricane, and, pursued by storms, the frail fleet was driven back, and escaped with difficulty among the harbours of the south-west coast of Sicily. While these misfortunes were taking place, and the damaged galleys were being hastily repaired at Trepani, the Goletta was taken, and Tunis, after a siege of twenty days, was carried by assault.*

* In the story of the *Captive*, in the fourth book of the first part of "*Don Quixote*," the following graphic account of the re-taking of Tunis by the infidels is thus related. As Cervantes was certainly in Sardinia at the time, he may probably have obtained the particulars from one of his fellow-soldiers:—"The year after, which was 1574, they attacked the Goletta, and the fort which Don Juan begun, but not above half finished, before Tunis. All this while I was a galley-slave, without any hopes of liberty; at least, I could not promise myself to obtain it by way of ransom, for I was resolved not to write my father the news of my misfortune. La Goletta and the fort were both taken after some resistance,—the Turkish army consisting of 75,000 Turks in pay, and above 400,000 Moors and Arabs out of all Africa, near the sea, with such provisions of war of all kinds, and so many pioneers, that they might have covered the Goletta and the fort with earth by handfuls. The Goletta was first taken, though always before reputed impregnable; and it was not lost by any fault of its defenders, who did all that could be expected from them, but because it was found by experience that it was practicable to make trenches in that sandy soil, which was thought to have water under it within two feet, and

Don Juan received this intelligence just as he was again prepared to sail. Mortified, both in his pride as a general and his ambition as a prince, bitterly repenting that he had not razed and dismantled every stone of the fortifications at Tunis, instead of attempting to hold them for Spain, by means of an insufficient garrison, and deeply lamenting the seven thousand brave fellows who were all killed or carried into captivity, he left the fleet and army under the command of the Duke of Sesa, and went back, sadly, to Naples. From Naples, after a few weeks, he started for Spain, and spent the winter at the court of Madrid, when the king conferred upon him the title of Lieutenant of all Italy.

In the meantime, Cervantes was quartered at Palermo, under the supreme command of the Duke of Sesa. There the brothers passed the greater part

the Turks digged above two yards before they came at any ; by which means, filling sacks with sand, and laying them one on another, they raised them so high that they commanded from that fortification the fort, in which none could be safe nor show themselves upon the walls. * * * The new fort was likewise lost, but the Turks got it foot by foot, for the soldiers who defended it sustained two-and-twenty assaults, and in them killed above 25,000 of those barbarians ; and when it was taken, of 300 that were alive, there was not one man unwounded,—a certain sign of the bravery of the garrison and of their skill in defending places.”—“Don Quixote,” chap. xii. book iv. part 1.

of the winter, and early in March, 1575, were forwarded again to Naples, and garrisoned at Saint Elmo. Here they found Manuel, with a detachment of Monçada's regiment, and so spent many a pleasant day together boating about the beautiful familiar bay, and enjoying all the amusements of that most joyous of European cities.

The war, however, was now over. The Moors had retaken their old possessions ; Spain was weary of wasting men and treasure ; and the troops saw a long period of peace and inactivity in prospect. Don Lope di Figueroa, and many other officers of rank and distinction, obtained leave of absence, and returned home to their wives and families ; and Miguel de Cervantes, who had worn the king's livery ever since the month of October, 1571, began to long for Spain again :—

Spain, the land of fan-leaved chestnuts ;
Spain, the land of oil and wine !

Yes, he had now been a soldier for nearly five years. He had been wounded more than once ; he had lost a hand ; he had served under the burning sun of Africa ; he had been in imminent danger of shipwreck ; and his general health was impaired by so many changes of climate and the fatigues of so many

campaigns. He had received in return neither promotion, nor fame, nor even adequate compensation in booty or pay. Thinking over these things, he resolved to ask leave to return to Spain and petition the king himself for the guerdon which he so amply deserved. Were this petition refused or disregarded, he made up his mind to leave the army and seek his fortune as a man of letters.

Accordingly, when Don Juan of Austria returned to Naples in June, with the title of Lieutenant of all Italy, Cervantes waited upon him at the vice-regal palace, and received not only an immediate and hearty assent to his request as regarded himself, but permission for his brother to accompany him, and a free passage for both on board of a government galley called *El Sol* (the Sun), which was to sail from Naples for Valencia on the 19th September. Some days before the 19th, there came an order to St. Elmo, desiring Miguel de Cervantes to wait upon Don Juan at a certain hour of the following day. Poor Miguel thought his leave was, for certain, withdrawn; and went, at the appointed time, in a very melancholy mood. His melancholy was soon changed to joy and gratitude, however, when Don Juan laid a packet of papers before him, and showed him that they were letters of recommendation, written, one

with his own princely hand, and the other by the Duke of Sesa, setting forth in the strongest terms the valour, personal worth, and long services of their esteemed friend and brave soldier, Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra.

Dismissed from the audience with such kind words of well-wishing as he was proud to receive from his commander-in-chief, Cervantes went back to St. Elmo with a light heart, and on the 19th of September embarked, with his brother, in the company of Don Carillo de Quesada, Don Juan de Valcazar, and some five or six other Spanish officers of military rank, returning, like themselves, on leave of absence.

Westward, across the blue sea, they took their happy course, and made direct for the Straits of Bonifacio, between the islands of Sardinia and Corsica. At the town of Bonifacio they put in for two days, for the purpose of shipping goods ; and sailed again on the morning of the 24th, still steering westward, and intending to touch at Majorca and Minorca on their way to Valencia. Early in the forenoon of the 26th, just as a blue hill (that seemed to take its colour from the waves out of which it rose) became visible through the morning mist, three Algerine corsairs hove into sight about two miles to leeward. Hitherto the vaporous atmosphere had concealed them, and now

flight seemed almost hopeless. Still the captain of *El Sol* crowded all sail, and made for the blue hill, which he knew to be Minorca, whither no corsair, however bold, would dare to follow. All was, however in vain. The Moorish galleys, built for speed and urged by practised rowers, swept over the waves like great sea-birds of prey, and gained upon the Spanish boat at every dash of their oars.

"There is no help for us, save in God and St. Jago," said the captain, with the calm despair of a brave man. "We must even fight for it, my men! Clear decks, and lay to. 'Tis death or slavery, remember!"

The sailors gave a hearty cheer; the decks were cleared; cutlasses were distributed; the guns (there were but two) were got ready for action; and Miguel and Rodrigo Cervantes, with the rest of their military companions, put on their cuirasses and helmets, for the honour of King Philip, and saw to the priming of the muskets.

Up came the corsairs, in deadly silence. *El Sol* began the combat gallantly, by discharging her two guns, both of which took effect among the Algerines. In another moment the devoted little ship was surrounded, grappled with, and boarded. A desperate fight ensued, but the pirates were fifteen to one, and

armed to the teeth, and the struggle lasted only a few minutes. Almost in less time than it takes to relate it, the Christians were heavily fettered and carried on board the Moorish vessels ; *El Sol* was taken in tow, with her gay flag torn from her mast-head ; and captors and captives were speeding fast towards the coast of Africa.

CHAPTER XIX.

The city of captivity.

LET us picture to ourselves a vast stone building, oblong in shape, two stories in height, and enclosing in the centre a paved yard, measuring about seventy feet long by forty wide. Surrounding this yard runs a double row of small windows, closely barred with iron, and unprovided with glass. In the centre of it stands a large cistern ; and at the lower end, close against the east corner of the building, may be seen a low doorway, over which a cross has been rudely sculptured. This doorway leads to a chapel. Opposite the chapel, at the west corner, and correspondingly at the north and south corners, at the upper end of the yard, three more small but massive portals open from the ground-corridors, and are each secured by a strong iron grate, and an iron-plated door. The double row of windows lights two stories of stone cells, one window to each cell ; and these cells open off from long stone corridors which run all round the building, and are dimly lighted by narrow loopholes pierced through the outer walls. Each cell is closed in by an iron-plated

door, and contains no other furniture than a straw pallet. Far underground, so low that those in the ground-floors can hear no sound among their occupants, are more cells—dark, damp, lonely, terrible vaults, like places of unholy sepulture.

This building is the Royal Bagnio, or prison of the galley-slaves in Algiers.

The Bagnio stands a little beyond the city walls, on an elevation which commands on one side the blue Mediterranean, and on the other the great plain of the Metidja, with the chain of the lesser Atlas in the distance. The hills round about the city look brown and parched ; and at intervals, all along the high white wall that circles in the town, may be observed large iron hooks projecting from the masonry, on which the Christian prisoners are horribly impaled, and there left till they die slowly in the burning sun. Within those walls lies the steep, dirty, tortuous, up-and-down labyrinth, called the city of Algiers. The streets are like flights of rough, irregular steps ; so steep are they, so narrow, and so ill paved. In some the buildings almost meet overhead ; and in others passages are tunnelled through the lower stories of the houses ; mere dark alleys, with an opening of daylight at each end. In all these dwellings there is a blind windowless look, which strikes almost painfully upon

the European stranger. Here and there a tiny casement breaks the blank surface of the walls ; but it is barred and latticed as if the creature within were a wild beast, or a lunatic. Sometimes a projecting bar extends at right angles from the window, with an iron crescent at the end to warn off evil spirits from the house. Up and down the difficult streets, climbing as easily as cats, go long strings of mules with tinkling bells, beautiful sleek Eastern donkeys and camels heavily laden, followed by their Moorish or Arabian drivers, the latter in long woollen robes, and linen head-gear, bound round by a fillet of camel's hair cord. Now and then, a woman glides by, closely veiled, and robed all in white. Now and then a negro water-carrier ; a Turk, insolently thrusting aside whatever impedes his passage ; a troop of pale European captives, clanking their heavy chains at every step, and bending under cruel burthens ; an Algerine seaman, with his belt full of weapons ; or a Dervish, with his greasy robe and pointed cap. Down in the market-place, near the port, are fruit and sherbet sellers, dealers in tortoises and chamelions, fish, sweetmeats, and poultry ; and in the bazaar stores for woollen cloths, tobacco, pipes, jewellery, arms, coffee, rice, and other raw or manufactured goods. Highest up of all, on the crest of the hill upon which the city is built,

stands the Cashbah, or palace of the Dey, who, though actually but the lieutenant of the Sultan, is a despotic sovereign while his term of government endures. Adjoining this palace, which, with its gardens, seraglios, and outbuildings, is in itself a little town, stands another prison for the private slaves belonging to the Dey. A mosque, a public bath-house, and several large barracks, constitute the rest of the public buildings.

Such is the Royal Bagnio, such is Algiers, when Cervantes de Saavedra is brought thither into captivity, A.D. 1575. It was to be his dwelling-place for many a weary year, and therefore we have been at pains thus minutely to picture it as it was when he knew it, when he suffered in it, three centuries ago.

CHAPTER XX.

Cervantes, the slave.

POOR Cervantes ! The very letters which he had hoped should make his fortune in Spain, proved his perdition in Algiers.

He became, according to Corsair law, the property of the captain of the galley in which he was conveyed to the coast. This captain was a Greek renegade, named Dali Mami ; who, finding that his prisoner carried letters of recommendation from Don Juan of Austria and the Duke of Sesa, and that he was described in these letters as the "esteemed friend" of these generals, at once concluded that he must be a nobleman of great rank and riches. Acting upon this supposition, he caused him to be loaded with irons, and conveyed under a strict guard to the Royal Bagnio, where he hoped, by severe treatment, to exact from him a heavy ransom.*

* It would appear from the following passage in "Don Quixote," that this policy was most invariably pursued towards the prisoners of distinction. Probably their treatment was according to the pleasure of their several owners,—private,

In the neighbouring cells surrounding the inner yard of the Bagnio, were many other Christian prisoners, chiefly Spanish and Portuguese. Those who inhabited opposite sides could see each other from their narrow windows, and converse by signs ; and there were regular hours for exercise, when all (except those who had in some way offended, and been sentenced to extra punishment) were permitted to walk

public, and royal slaves being confined promiscuously in the one building :—" By this means I kept myself alive, shut up in a prison or house which the Turks call a Bagnio, where they keep their Christian slaves, as well those of the king as those who belong to private persons, and also those who are called *El Amacen*, that is, who belong to the public, and are employed by the city in works that belong to it. The latter do very difficultly obtain their liberty ; for, having no particular master, but belonging to the public, they can find nobody to treat with about their ransom, though they have money to pay it. The king's slaves, which are ransomable, are not obliged to go out to work, as the others do, except their ransom stays too long before it comes ; for, then to hasten it, they make them work and fetch wood with the rest, which is no small labour. I was one of those who were to be ransomed ; for when they knew I was a captain, though I told them the impossibility I was in of being redeemed because of my poverty, yet they put me among the gentlemen that were to be ransomed, and to that end they put me on a slight chain, rather as a mark of distinction than to restrain me by it ; and so I passed my life in that Bagnio with several other gentlemen of quality, who expected their ransom." — *Vide* "Don Quixote" (the Captive's Story), chap. xii. book iv. part 1.

in the enclosure, to hear mass in the chapel, and to amuse themselves as they pleased.

Locked up in his cell for the first ten days or so, without even this scanty liberty, Cervantes watched the captives from his grated window, and saw his brother, his fellow-travellers, and others whom he had known in the army of Don Juan, trailing their chains sadly round and round the yard. There he recognized Don Francisco de Meneses, a captain of infantry who had been left with his company as part of the ill-fated garrison of the Goleta; and one Doctor Antonio Sosa,* a clergyman famous for his piety and learning; his old comrades the Ensigns de Castaneda; a gentleman volunteer named Osorio; Don Beltran de Castilla; Captain Geronimo Ramirez; and several others whom he remembered as having been left at Tunis, and who had all been taken prisoners in the subsequent siege.

Towards the end of the second week of his captivity, however, Cervantes found himself treated somewhat more indulgently. His heavy fetters were exchanged for lighter ones, and he was permitted to take exercise in the courtyard, to mix with the other

* Some of the most interesting and authentic of extant documents relating to the adventures of Cervantes in Algiers are from the learned pen of Dr. A. Sosa.

prisoners, and to attend mass in the tiny chapel, where it was performed daily by Dr. Sosa.

It was a very melancholy society, at first, in the Bagnio. The prisoners were nearly all new comers, and not yet used to the loss of liberty. Most of them had been taken at the siege of Tunis ; but some, like the crew of *El Sol*, on their way to their dear native country. These last were the saddest of all, and with good reason ; for to be snatched away almost within sight of home was far more bitter than mere submission to the ordinary fortune of war.

One month, however, had hardly gone by, before the indomitable spirit of Cervantes had already conquered the first hopeless lassitude of captivity. It was not in that active nature to despond for long, or to sit down with folded hands before any difficulty which human courage, or patience, or wisdom, might surmount.

He made up his mind to escape.

He knew all the difficulties of such an enterprise. He knew the watchfulness of the gaolers, the strength of the iron bars, the thickness of the walls, the dangers of the open country. He also knew how cruelly all those who attempted flight were punished by their owners : how they were impaled, hung upon iron hooks, bastinadoed, left to languish in subter-

aneous dungeons, or chained to the oars of the corsair galleys. He knew all this ; but there was one thing that he did not know, and that was—fear. To escape, and to carry with him in his flight all his friends and comrades in arms, became the one dream and object of his life. Night after night he lay awake on his straw pallet, revolving in his mind every possible chance for the furtherance of this great end,—weighing danger against danger ; measuring means against obstacles ; reviewing all his resources ; calculating all his difficulties. Like a skilful general, he surveyed his ground from every point of view, and rejected every plan that failed to meet all the exigencies of the situation.

In the mean time he kept his own counsel so strictly that not even his brother suspected what was passing through his mind. He knew that a confidence once made could never be recalled, and that no large number of persons, however faithful, could safely be intrusted with a secret. They might talk of it together, and so be overheard. Even in sleep, one or other of the number might reveal it to the ever watchful ears of the prison spies. Nay, the very cheerfulness of their aspect, the very light of hope in their faces, might arouse suspicion, and so defeat all.

At the same time, Cervantes, with the intuitive

foresight of genius, exerted himself to prevent his comrades from falling into any condition of languor which might, hereafter, render them less capable of action. He set all kinds of amusements on foot. He busied his fertile brain in the invention of games which should occupy their minds ; and trials of skill and strength, which should keep up the physical condition of their bodies. By his advice they portioned off the day into three parts, and assigned to each its habitual employment. Thus, in the early morning, they wrestled, lifted weights, ran races in their chains, and practised the national dances of Spain. During the heat of midday, they conversed on literary matters, recited poetry, and related stories from history, or narratives of their own travels and adventures. In the evening they got up representations of public meetings and entertainments. Sometimes they organized a mock parliament, and debated questions of war, finance, and foreign policy. Sometimes they formed themselves into a court of justice, where one played the judge, one the prisoner at the bar, some the witnesses, some the advocates, and others the gentlemen of the jury. But their favourite pastime of all was a concert, performed by those who could sing, or imitate instruments with their voices ; or a play, in which the actors composed their parts as they

went on, like the performers of the mercenary comedy of the ancients. At such times a dozen or so would take it in turn to act, the youngest and best-looking being chosen for the heroine, and the rest sitting in judgment, as audience.

Thus, their minds and muscles alike retained their activity, and were even invigorated, within the walls of the Bagnio ; and many an eloquent orator, many an extempore poet, many an admirable actor, discovered talents hitherto unsuspected by himself.

One very aged captive there was, named Juan de Timoneda,* who had been so long a slave that he had grown grey in his chains. For a long time he sat silently at these prison entertainments, seldom smiling, never speaking, and at times seeming scarcely to comprehend what was going forward. One evening,

* Juan de Timoneda was the author of some tales written in the Italian style, and was also the publisher and editor of the comedies of Lope de Rueda. He was a bookseller and publisher by trade, and carried on his business in Valencia. The circumstances under which he fell into captivity are involved in obscurity. (*See Appendix to Roscoe's Life of Cervantes.*) Timoneda is thus mentioned by Bouterwell, in his "*History of Spanish Literature* :"—"Timoneda was the friend and enthusiastic admirer of Lope de Rueda ; but, in regard to literary acquirements, he ranked somewhat higher than that actor. He was, indeed, a man of genius and talent, as is evident from his novels."

however, to the amazement of all present, this old man rose suddenly in his place, and volunteered a recitation from one of the pastoral comedies of Lope de Rueda. Whatever might have been their surprise at his offer, his fellow-prisoners were still more astounded at his performance. Age, feebleness, tremulousness of voice, all vanished, as if by magic. The old man stood erect; his dim eye lighted up; and, with all the rich, oily, bucolic accent of the great comedian himself, he delivered a dialogue between two Biscayan boors.

When he had done, the prisoners crowded round him, applauding.

"I have heard nothing like it," said Cervantes, "since I was a boy, and saw Lope himself. You, Senor, must have often witnessed his performance!"

"I was his most intimate friend," replied the old man, sadly. "Ah me! we shall never see his like again!"

And repeating to himself, over and over, "We shall never see his like again," the white-headed captive crept back to his accustomed corner, relapsed into his habitual apathy, and from that day forth could never be induced to repeat another line.

Such were the pleasures by which these poor prisoners beguiled the monotony of their existence.

Without them, their pains and privations, bitter as they were, would have been still more bitter.

Taken prisoners in the burning midsummer, and robbed of all that they possessed when captured, Cervantes and his comrades were half naked by the time the cool season and the wintry rains came on. Their boots were worn out, their doublets were threadbare, and at night, not being allowed even an extra rug, they suffered cruelly from the cold. Besides this, their food was neither nutritious nor sufficient; and to complain of anything was to be punished.

Their greatest grief, however, was when they had to stand helplessly by, and witness the tortures inflicted on their companions. The Bagnio, as we have already related, was a place of confinement for the ransomable slaves of any owner who chose to send them here. Sometimes the owners would come to inspect the condition of their captives—as the owner of a kennel might drop in to glance at the hounds. These visits were terrible trials to the prisoners. Questioned about their means and families, browbeaten about their ransoms, disbelieved, contradicted, threatened, and stormed at alternately, if they protested their inability to meet the price set upon their liberty, they dreaded the sight of their captors even more than they detested their chains. It was the

policy of the owners always to assume that their prisoners were rich and noble. When the unhappy men denied that they were both, or either, the masters laughed at or insulted them ; brought perjured witnesses to prove that they were governors, counsellors, or, at the least, generals of division ;* and then, if they

* The following account of the manner in which these negotiations were conducted is from the narrative of Dr. Sosa :—"What are we to think of the depth of their infernal devices, when out of me, who am a poor clergyman, they have already upon their own authority, *et plenitudine potestatis*, made a bishop, and soon afterwards secretary to his holiness, his great counsellor and plenipotentiary ; nay, closeted me together with his holiness for eight hours a day at a sitting, treating together of most grave and weighty matters connected with the interests of Christendom ! When I denied having ever attained to such great honours, they made me a cardinal. When that also I disclaimed, they declared me to be the governor of Castelnuovo at Naples ; and as that would not serve their turn, they now make me father confessor and master, as they call me, to the queen of Spain. To establish this fact, as they stoutly maintain it, they have not scrupled to suborn both Turks and Moors who should affirm it ; and there were not wanting bad Christians, in this house as well as out of it, who, the better to please my master, averred that they knew it to be the case ; nay, so great is their assurance as almost to confound me ; for they brought forward some Turks, lately escaped from Naples, who, being confronted with me, declared that they had been engaged in my service when governor of Castelnuovo, in Naples, as cooks and scullions. In the same way, poor Juan Botto, who is now at my elbow, not only a very rich man, but a celebrated knight of Malta, and our friend Antonio Garces, one of the most distinguished nobles in Portugal."—*Vide* Appendix to "Roscoe's Life of Cervantes."

still persisted, or, being provoked beyond endurance, dared to utter an impatient word, punished them severely. To see a prisoner flung down and bastinadoed on the spot was no unusual event.* Sometimes a poor fellow was, for a mere word, hurried away, and deprived of both his ears. Sometimes he never returned at all, and they afterwards learned that he had been impaled or beheaded. On one occasion the learned and pious Dr. Sosa, was, for some trifling offence, dragged away from his companions, mercilessly beaten, and flung into an underground vault, where stripped, loaded with chains, and tied to a stone pillar, he was left for eight-and-forty hours without food, water, or daylight. From this dungeon he was carried back to the Bagnio in a fainting state, and there left to die or recover as he best could.

This last outrage determined Cervantes to hasten his preparations. He tended Dr. Sosa as if he had been his son. He communicated his plan to his friends, one by one, under a solemn oath of secrecy.

* "Nothing gave us such affliction as to hear and see the excessive cruelties with which our master used the other Christian slaves. He would hang one one day, then impale another, cut off the ears of another, and this upon such slight occasions, that often the Turks would own he did it only for the pleasure of doing it."—*Vide* "Don Quixote" (the Captive's Story), chap. xii. book iv. part 1.

He concerted a system of signals, fixed the day and hour when the attempt was to be made, and promised, in case of discovery or failure, to take the whole blame of the enterprise upon his own head.

The day—the prayed for, dreaded, desired day—came at last. It was the anniversary of a religious festival among the infidels. There were guns firing all the morning from the forts; salutes from the ships in the harbour; voices of priests in the minarets calling to prayers; clash and clang of cymbals in the streets, as the janizaries went to and fro upon horseback; and all the universal life and movement of a public holiday. At mid-day, when the Mahomedan takes his siesta, a long interval of quiet fell upon the busy town; but towards evening, the rejoicings broke out with renewed vehemence; and as it grew dusk, the air was lighted up by showers of green and crimson rockets; the mosque, the citadel, the walls, and even the shipping, were illuminated with millions of lamps; and the guns thundered from height to height, and from galley to galley, as if Algiers were besieged by all Christendom.

Under cover of the noises from without, and at a given signal, which sounded like the hooting of

an owl, eighteen Spanish prisoners dropped that evening from the iron-barred windows of their cells in the Bagnio down upon the pavement of the courtyard below. Every night, for the last week, they had been filing those bars till only a slender support was left at the top and bottom of each ; and this support they had now broken away at a blow. Armed each with the heavy iron stanchion which he had so detached, they stole silently along in the gloom of the wall, and waited on each side of the grated door through which the gaolers would presently enter on their evening round. Half an hour went by thus, during which they could almost hear the beating of each other's hearts. Then came the echo of footsteps in the corridor—the flashing of a torch—the sound of approaching voices, jesting roughly—the grating of a key in the lock ; and then

—Then a sudden darkness, a stifled cry, a silent struggling, as of dumb animals in deadly fight !

Then the grating of the lock again—a sound of retreating footsteps—the opening and shutting of distant doors.

Then silence.

Some hours later, when three of the gaolers who had been absent in the town, amusing themselves

after their own noisy, barbaric, national fashion, came back to the Bagnio, they found four of their fellow officers lying gagged and bound upon the pavement of the courtyard; eighteen iron bars wrenched from their places, and eighteen Spanish prisoners—nowhere.

CHAPTER XXI.

Across the desert.

ABOUT two hundred miles to the west of Algiers, lying nearly opposite Cape de Gata in Spain, stood, and stands, the fortified coast-town of Oran, a harbour and colony belonging to the Spanish crown. Across these two hundred miles of sand and desert lay the path of the fugitives.

Once fairly out of the Bagnio, they had but to follow the faint light that still hovered over the west, and push on for the open country. Fortunately for them, the prison lay nearly half a mile beyond the town wall, so they had no gates or sentries to encounter. Fortunately, also, in passing through the gaoler's guard-room, they had secured a loose Turkish robe and cap, which Cervantes immediately put on, and a scimitar, which he carried naked in his hand. Thus disguised, he pretended to drive his friends before him for the first two or three miles of the road; so that those who met them might take him for an overseer in charge of his master's slaves. When they had gone about two leagues, and found

themselves leaving the cultivated ground in their rear, they flung away the heavy iron bars which they had hitherto carried as weapons of defence, and trusted to speed for their safety.

During the whole of that first night they travelled steadily forward, keeping the sea always on their right, and taking it in turn to give Dr. Sosa, who was still suffering, the support of an arm on each side. Towards dawn they rested for an hour in a natural cavern by the shore ; resuming their march as soon as the sun was up, and toiling forward till noon, when they reached a forest of prickly pears which seemed to stretch away for miles before them. Plunging into this forest, every tree of which was a giant cactus rooted in sand, they encamped for the day, and took the rest which they so greatly needed. The ripe pear-like fruit yet loaded the trees, and was eagerly gathered by the thirsty fugitives, each of whom carried a little store of bread and rice, which he had put aside of late from his daily rations, but no water.

Having fed and slept, undisturbed by any sign of pursuit, they started off again at twilight, always following the shore ; and so travelled for miles with the cactus forest on one hand and the moaning waves on the other. Now and then they heard the howl-

ing of a jackal, or the distant roar of some more formidable forest brute ; but their numbers insured them against any danger of attack. By-and-by, they left the forest behind them, and emerged upon an endless expanse of desolate sand-hills, which, seen by the uncertain moonlight, looked like a world in ruins. Through this weary waste they toiled again till dawn, again rested for an hour, and again resumed their journey with day. As the sun rose higher, they began to look round anxiously, in search of some sheltered spot in which to rest till night. On one side lay the blue, restless sea. Everywhere else, hemming them in like another ocean, stretched far and near, the undulating desert. Sand—burning, shifting, tawny, sand—hot under the feet ; parching on the lips ; smarting to the eyes ; sinking an inch at every step ; here piled in hillocks, there furrowed in valleys. Sand—sand—everlasting sand !

Coming, presently, to a low line of sand-heaps, it was proposed that one of their number should climb the highest, and take a reconnaissance. Cervantes, as the leader of the party, went first ; and a gentleman named Baltazar del Salto followed him. On reaching the summit, a sight as extraordinary as it was unexpected, burst upon them. An immense lake, like an inland sea, dotted over with wooded

islands, and bounded by a range of purple hills, lay stretched before their eyes. On one of these islands stood an oriental city, with domes and minarets that glittered in the sun, and were reflected in broken outlines upon the quivering waters beneath. An exclamation of surprise and delight broke from their lips at the same instant. They turned to cheer on their companions ; and, turning, saw to their dismay—almost to their terror—that the whole desert over which they had just been toiling, presented the same appearance. Everywhere water—everywhere islands, trees, palaces, and minarets !

“*Sancta Maria !*” cried Don Baltazar, crossing himself devoutly, “is this sorcery, or the work of the Evil one ?”

“Neither,” replied Cervantes, sadly, “it is the mirage of the desert ! I have heard of it often. ’Tis a mere mockery of the eye. Let us forward !”

On they went again, till nearly an hour past noon, when, quite suddenly, they came upon a little green valley, about half a mile from the coast, a well, a group of palm-trees, and a Moorish village. On the sands beside the sea, some three or four boats were lying high and dry ; and on a row of stakes close by, hung a few tattered nets. Footsore, fainting with thirst, and heartsick as they were, this settlement of

primitive fishers seemed to them a paradise. They marched boldly up to the huts. The dogs barked furiously ; the women and children fled in terror ; but the men received them gravely, bade them welcome, and placed milk and bread before them. Presently the women and children ventured back, and stood at a little distance, watching them as they ate in the shadow of the palms.

Having satisfied their hunger and thirst, the fugitives crept thankfully under a shed, and slept till Cervantes woke them at dusk. In the mean time, like a wise leader, he had engaged a Moorish guide ; for the direct route across the desert was shorter than the shore by fifty miles ; but hitherto, having neither guide nor compass, they had not dared to attempt it. The Moor, they agreed, was to be paid on their arrival ; and Cervantes promised him, in the name of the governor of Oran, a reward of ten golden Spanish pistoles.

Leaving the fishing hamlet behind them, and seeming, for the first time, to turn their backs to the sea, they now struck across the desert, and travelled all that night in a north-westerly direction. In the morning, as usual, they halted and slept ; marched on again when the sun was up, and paused for the day in the shelter of some rocks, at the foot of which

grew a few stunted aloes, and, half buried in the sand, some dozen or more of the precious melon-cacti, beneath whose thorny rind lies a well of delicious juice for the refreshment of the traveller in the desert. Here the poor wanderers pierced the welcome fruit, and made their midday meal ; after which they slept profoundly.

When they awoke next it was dusk, and their guide was gone. In vain they waited, shouted, climbed the rocks, and tried through the gathering twilight to discern some sign of his whereabouts. Whether his heart had failed him in the vastness of the desert, or whether he mistrusted the proffered payment, they knew not. They only knew that he was gone ; and that, having left the coast-road, they were lost and alone in the pathless wilderness.

That night a detachment of mounted janizaries arrived at the fishing-village, and heard that the "Christian dogs," in search of whom they had been scouring the desert for the last three days, were but a few hours in advance of them.

"Five gold sequins to the man who tracks them to their hiding-place !" shouted the officer in command.

A Moor stepped forward, and volunteered. If the captain would lend him a horse, he undertook to find

the slaves within three hours ; but he had walked some leagues that day, and was footsore.

The captain dismounted one of his own men, and lent him the horse, and away they galloped, raising a cloud of sand at every hoof-print, Moor and janizaries together.

But the traitor was careful not to tell the captain that he had, that very morning, and the night preceding, acted as a guide to those very fugitives whom he was betraying.

They overtook them some three hours before dawn. The Christians were weary and defenceless ; the Turks were mounted, armed to the teeth, and nearly twice their number. Even to attempt resistance was impossible.

"Dogs !" cried the captain, "ye shall all die for this—ay, ye shall die a thousand deaths !"

"Let me suffer them all," said Cervantes. "I planned it. I persuaded the rest. I alone am criminal."

The captain stared. He thought the Spaniard must be mad, or a fool.

"Nay, by the Prophet !" said he, "tell that, an thou wilt, to Hassan Aga ; but I warn thee the Dey is no woman-heart. He will have thee put to death piecemeal."

Cervantes was no boaster. He smiled, and was silent.

As for the Moor, he covered his face with his cloak, took his five gold sequins, and slipped away in the darkness, like a thief.

The next night, they were all lying, doubly and trebly fettered, in the lowest dungeons of the Bagnio at Algiers.

CHAPTER XXII.

Treateth of many things which are matters of history.

THE Dey, at this time in Algiers, was named Hassan Aga. He was, as we have said elsewhere, a viceroy of the Sultan, and despotic while his temporary sovereignty lasted. One of the privileges of his office was a right of seizure, by means of which he became master of all slaves who, having attempted to escape, were re-taken, and brought back to Algiers. This, however, was a privilege which disuse had rendered obsolete; and to which the slave-owners were so unanimously opposed that no viceroy, for many years past, had ventured to enforce it. Hassan Aga, nevertheless, was determined to re-establish it, if possible, and for that purpose caused the fugitives to be brought before him. Having heard the particulars, he then, to the amazement of all present, declared the offenders forfeit to the Sultan, and straightway ordered them to be conveyed to the viceregal Bagnio. In vain Dali Mami, and the other slave-owners, remonstrated, implored, even menaced the representative of the Ottoman empire. Hassan

Aga had said it, and the captives were his. The slave-owners, however, were too large and powerful a body to be trifled with. Most of them were corsair captains, or privateers commanding piratical crews, and well provided with munitions of war. A revolt on their part would have been equivalent to a siege, and Hassan Aga was not prepared to meet the exigencies of so extreme a case. He therefore took counsel with his chief officers, and, having wisely determined that it was not worth while to risk Algiers for a few slaves more or less, returned Cervantes and his friends to their former masters.

They now found themselves more closely guarded than ever, and there were times when even Cervantes almost gave up the hope of ever achieving his liberty. The mild African winter thus went by, and the spring and summer of 1576. In October, some few Christians were ransomed by their relatives and departed for Spain, carrying with them abundant store of messages and letters from those who were left behind. Amongst others, a young ensign named Gabriel de Castañeda, whom Cervantes had known at Messina, took a letter for him to Alcala de Henares, in which he described the miserable condition of his brother and himself, and implored his father to draw up an appeal to the king on their behalf.

Don Rodrigo received this letter as his own sentence of perpetual poverty. Too proud to ask help from his family, and too obscure to hope for a hearing at the court of Madrid, he at once mortgaged his little estate, and reserved for himself only a bare subsistence. Even the small sum which he had destined for the marriage portions of his two daughters, was, with their consent, given up for the same loving purpose. When all was done, Don Rodrigo wrote to his sons, and informed them that Don Martin de Cordova, the Governor of Oran, had his authority to treat for their ransom, to the amount of four hundred golden crowns of Spain. Almost wild with joy, Cervantes sent for Dali Mami, and offered him two hundred for his own liberty, and two hundred for his brother's; but that sum, though fully as much as was ever demanded for the ransom of a volunteer, or non-commissioned officer, fell far below the exorbitant expectations of the corsair-captain. Still believing that Cervantes must be a man of high position, if not of august rank, he disdainfully rejected the proposition, declared he would not hear of a less sum than five hundred crowns for Miguel and two hundred and fifty for Rodrigo, and swore by the Prophet that sooner than part with them for less, he would hang them both from the top-mast of his galley.

After this, all hope for Miguel seemed gone. He knew that, without selling the roof from over his head and depending on charity for daily bread, his father could never raise so large an amount as seven hundred and fifty crowns. His disappointment was heavy ; but he met it like a man, and, if he sighed, sighed in secret. Rodrigo, like a generous fellow, was for at once returning the whole sum, that his father might redeem the mortgage ; but Miguel would not hear of it.

“No, brother,” he said ; “thou, at least, shalt be saved. Our father must not be without one son in his old age ; and our sisters need a protector. For thy ransom, there is enough, and to spare. Go ; and when thou art free, hire an armed bark and send it to the coast here, near Algiers, for my deliverance and the deliverance of our brave friends !”

So Rodrigo agreed to be ransomed, and Cervantes treated for his liberty with Dali Mami, who consented to set him free at the price of two hundred and thirty crowns. Such, however, were the heart-wearing delays, and so many the difficulties to be encountered, that it was not till the month of August, 1577, that the elder Saavedra finally obtained his freedom, and set sail for Spain.

In the meantime, Miguel had already begun to

make preparations for the escape of those who remained ; and this time the nature of his plan compelled him to take several persons into his confidence. About three miles from the coast, to the eastward of Algiers, and about two miles and a half from the Bagnio, lay a garden and pleasure-house belonging to a rich Greek renegade, named Azan, who held the rank of an Alcayde, and lived in a sumptuous palace near the Cashbah of the Dey. This garden and pleasure-house were kept in order by a Christian slave, called Juan,* a native of Navarre, who had a brother in the Bagnio, whom he occasionally came to visit. During one of these visits, he became acquainted with Cervantes ; and, being a brave and faithful fellow, offered to help him by any means in his power. There was, he said, a cavern in his master's garden, which had formerly been used as an ice-store ; and in this cavern he could, if necessary, conceal from twelve to fifteen persons. Here was precisely what Cervantes wanted for the completion of his plans. One by one, with the aid of files, disguises, and such other appliances, no less than fifteen Christian captives contrived to escape ; all at separate times and long intervals, so that no suspicion

* *Vide* Roscoe's "Life of Cervantes," and Don Diego de Haedo's "Historia y Topografia de Argel."

of a general plot became aroused in the minds of the gaolers. As they fled, they each took refuge in the Alcayde's ice-house, where Juan, being supplied with money by Cervantes, faithfully concealed them. Finding it, however, impossible to keep watch over their safety, and yet go down frequently to the market of Algiers to purchase provisions for their maintenance, the gardener was compelled to trust the secret to a young man called *El Dorador*,* who had once been a renegade, but now again professed the Christian faith. This man, on whom both Juan and Cervantes placed firm reliance, undertook to act as their messenger and buyer, and occasionally relieved guard with Juan when the captives ventured out at night for air and exercise. So well had all been managed, and so carefully had the secret been kept, that by the time Rodrigo de Cervantes sailed from Algiers, the whole fifteen Spaniards were already safe in the cavern. Cervantes now alone remained, and, on the 20th of September, when his brother had been gone nearly a month, he also escaped, and followed them. To his deep sorrow, Doctor Sosa, who had been his most intimate friend in captivity, and whom he loved almost as a father,

* *Id est*, the gilder ; gilding being, probably, his trade.—*Vide Roscoe.*

was no longer capable of encountering the difficulties of the enterprise. The disastrous attempt of 1575 had been too much for his strength, and, since then, he had broken down suddenly, and become an old man.

By this time, Rodrigo had hired and despatched a brigantine commanded by an experienced seaman named Viana, who had himself once been a slave, and who was acquainted with the coast of Barbary. Having set sail from Valencia about the 25th, he neared Algiers after dark on the evening of the 28th, and dropped anchor in a little cove, which was the nearest point along-shore to the Alcayde's garden. Here he lowered a boat and despatched a messenger to summon the fugitives on board. Before the messenger, however, could gain the beach, some Moorish fishermen caught sight of the brigantine, and knowing her to be of Spanish build, raised so loud an alarm that the boatmen had to row back as fast as they could, and Viana was compelled to put off to sea with all speed. On the night of the 30th, he coasted up again to the same point, under cover of the darkness, but with no better success. Perhaps, suspicion had been roused along that part of the shore, or, perhaps, the fish abounded in that direction. The cove, at all events, was full of Moorish barks,

and it was with difficulty that Viana and his crew escaped falling into their hands and being taken prisoners.*

Meanwhile, Cervantes and his fellow Christians waited patiently for the help that never came. Crowded together in that damp and dreary cavern, with scarcely a gleam of daylight, or a breath of wholesome air, they consoled themselves with the hope of coming freedom—that freedom of which Cervantes himself is recorded to have said, “that it is, next to honour, the most precious gift of heaven; in order to regain which we ought to risk life itself; since slavery is the greatest evil that can fall to the lot of man.”

Fortune, however, was against them. The brigantine came, indeed; but they knew it not. Had all gone well, they might have embarked on the night of the 28th or the 30th, and have been free and happy men, treading their own dear Spanish ground, before the next sun went down. Of this blessing they were defrauded by an evil chance; and even

* Contemporary authorities differ widely upon the subject of this attempt. Roscoe is of opinion that Viana and his crew were taken by the Moors; others aver that they never neared the land sufficiently, and failed only for want of courage. Dr. Sosa, however, testifies to their having twice approached the shore.

here their misfortunes were not permitted to end. Treachery was yet destined to consummate what chance had left undone. At about mid-day, on the 31st of September, a troop of twenty-four foot soldiers and ten mounted janizaries appeared at the gate of the Alcayde's garden, seized the gardener, surrounded the ice-house, and took every fugitive into custody. El Dorador had turned traitor at the last moment, and betrayed them all into the hands of the Dey.

Dragged before Hassan Aga for the second time, Cervantes again declared that it was he who organized the plot, who persuaded the rest, and who was alone deserving of punishment. The Dey, however, would not believe that neither the Governor of Oran, nor the Padre Olivar (who was agent for the redemption of slaves in Algiers), had been concerned in the plot. He questioned, cross-questioned, flattered, persuaded, menaced ; but all to no purpose. Neither promise of pardon nor threat of torture could induce Cervantes to waver for one moment ; so Hassan Aga was forced to content himself with again appropriating the fugitives, and confining them in his own private Bagnio. As for Cervantes, he was loaded with heavy chains, consigned to a subterraneous dungeon, and there kept on bread and water till the close of the year 1577, when he was for a short time returned to Dali Mami,

his former master. Poor Juan, in the meantime, had been cruelly put to death by the Alcayde's own hands ; and El Dorador, having relapsed into Mahometanism, was rewarded with an official situation in the city, where he died on the 30th of September, 1580, exactly three years from the time of his treachery.

Early in the year 1578, the Dey, Hassan Aga, bought Cervantes from his master for five hundred escudos, in order that he might keep him imprisoned in his own dungeons. He was, indeed, so apprehensive of his valour and ingenuity that, but for the hope of some day receiving a large ransom for him, he would undoubtedly have put him, long ago, to an ignominious death. He was even in the habit of acknowledging that "so long as the one-handed Spaniard was well watched, Algiers, with all its wealth of slaves and shipping, was in safety."

"Well watched" as he was, though, Cervantes was not yet daunted. For two years longer he remained the slave of the Dey ; and, during those two years, made no fewer than three fresh efforts to regain his liberty. On one of these occasions, when he was discovered to be in communication with the Governor of Oran, an unfortunate Moor, whom he had engaged as his messenger, was impaled alive. Another time, he was convicted of having employed one Giron, a Spa-

nish renegade, to purchase a twelve-oared brigantine for the purpose of conveying himself and sixty other captives to the coast of Spain. Of the third, and last of these subsequent attempts, no distinct account has been preserved. All that we know amounts to a mere outline of the facts. There were at that time, in Algiers, twenty-five thousand Christian captives of various nations, of whom but a very small per-centage could ever hope to regain their liberty. Cervantes proposed to unite these twenty-five thousand men in a vast confederacy ; to organize a sudden and simultaneous rising ; to take possession of the city and port of Algiers, and deliver it up for ever to the Spanish monarchy. Had this grand scheme been successfully carried out, it would have made one of the noblest episodes of mediæval history. Cervantes would, probably, have become a great general ; " Don Quixote " would never have been written ; and while the military annals of Spain would have been emblazoned with the name of another hero, the literature of all the world would have lost one of its rarest treasures. But these things were not to be. The great project, however subtly planned, was, as usual, betrayed ; and brave men suffered, while traitors prospered.*

* Both Haedo and Dr. Sosa have recorded it as their opinion that " if the good fortune of Cervantes had been equal to

In the meantime, there were loving hearts at home that yearned for Miguel—yearned and ached for him, and refused to be comforted. The mother, though she rejoiced to have her eldest boy once more in her arms, wept for the youngest till her pillow every night was wet with tears. His sisters prayed for him when they rose up, or lay down ; were proud of him in the midst of their sorrow ; loved to whisper to each other of his exploits ; and comforted themselves, poor, fond souls ! by working delicate shirts and embroidering ruffles for him against the time when he should come back to Alcala de Henares. Then came the recollection of how his dear wrists were even now wearing the cruel iron, and their tears dropped fast to think of the lost hand, and the lifelong scars those ruffles would conceal.

And all this time, while the mother and sisters waited and hoped, after their sweet womanly fashion, the father and brother of the captive bent every

his courage, perseverance, and skill, the city of Algiers would have been at that time in the power of the Christians ; for that his bold and resolute projects aimed at no less a result. Moreover, that if he had not been sold and betrayed by those who undertook to assist him in his grand and noble project—to liberate the captives of so many lands—as well as so many future sufferers, his own captivity might have proved a fortunate event.”—*Vide* Appendix to Roscoe’s “Life of Cervantes.”

energy to the task of redeeming him. Too poor to amass sufficient for his ransom, they drew up a petition recounting his military services, his captivity, age, birth, family, and literary abilities. To this paper Don Beltran de Castilla, the ensigns de Castañeda and de Sansisteban, and one sergeant Antonio de Monsalve, all lately ransomed out of Algiers, appended their signatures as witnesses ; while the Duke of Sesa, who had just returned from Sicily, signed a certificate of his merit, and recommended him to the favour and compassion of his sovereign. Just as these papers were in readiness, and an Alcade of the court had undertaken to present them in due form, old Don Rodrigo de Cervantes died suddenly, and the younger Rodrigo became the responsible head and sole support of the family.

Thus time went on, and brought the midsummer of the year 1579. King Philip, it was said, was about to despatch a mission to Algiers for the redemption of Spanish slaves, and the Padre Juan Gil, procurator of the order of the Holy Trinity, was nominated ambassador from the court of Spain. The poor mother and sisters consulted together. The petition had been presented long ago, and nothing had come of it. They resolved to make one last, desperate effort. They sold their jewels, their library,

and a few acres of meadow land, which were all that was now left of their little patrimony ; and with the sum which these produced, waited upon the Padre Juan Gil, and implored him to ransom Miguel de Cervantes. They had but three hundred ducats. It was a very tiny sum to offer for a prisoner so famous and so dreaded as Cervantes ; but they hoped against hope, and sent up a second petition to the King, and were so humble, so earnest, so devoted, that all Madrid came, before long, to compassionate and respect them.

We will give what follows in the words of Roscoe,* for we are dealing here with simple facts, and cannot do better than let the historian relate them in his own language.

“ Donna Leonora ” (the mother of Cervantes), “ in order to increase this sum, renewed the application which had been begun by her husband, and presented to the King a petition, supported by the judicial information and certificate from the Duke de Sesa, praying that his Majesty, in consideration of the meritorious services of her son, and in compassion to their impoverished circumstances, would grant an aid for his ransom. The King listened graciously

* “ Life and Writings of Cervantes.”

to this petition, and on the 17th of January, 1580, granted Donna Leonora permission to export from the kingdom of Valencia merchandise not prohibited, to the amount of ten thousand ducats, the profits to be derived from which might be sent for the ransom of her son ; but such was the ill-fortune of the family, that this favour was of no avail, the profits not realising more than sixty ducats. In the meanwhile, the Fathers of Redemption had proceeded on their voyage to Algiers, where they arrived on the 29th of May, 1580, the day of the most Holy Trinity, and began to treat immediately for the redemption of the captives. The difficulty which they experienced in ransoming Cervantes delayed them some time, for the Dey insisted on receiving for him a thousand pieces, thus doubling the price of his purchase, and threatening that if they should not advance this sum, he would carry him with him to Constantinople. For Hassan Aga's term of government having now expired, and Jafer Basha being appointed his successor by the Grand Turk, he was now on the eve of departing for that capital with four barks belonging to himself and his chaya, or major-domo, armed with his own slaves and renegades, and carrying with them a convoy of seven other vessels on their return to Turkey. Cervantes was

already on board, loaded with chains and fetters, when the Padre Gil, compassionating his situation, and fearing that he might lose for ever the opportunity of recovering his liberty, did not rest until he succeeded in redeeming him for five hundred pieces of gold of Spain, raising this amount from the merchants, and applying towards it a sum from the redemption fund and particular charities, to make up the requisite payment. The bargain being concluded and the officers of the galley being gratified by nine dollars for their fees, Cervantes was disembarked on the 19th of September, at the very moment that Hassan Aga set sail for Constantinople."

It was now just five years, all but seven days, since the galley *El Sol* was overtaken and captured in the blue waters off the isle of Majorca, on that fatal morning of the 26th of September, 1575. Cervantes could scarcely believe that he was once more a free man ; free to come and go in the streets, in the harbour, on the beach, even in the weary Bagnio ; free, above all, to seek his passage back to Spain in the first vessel that offered.

Five years ! He kept repeating the words to himself with a kind of melancholy wonder, as he lay down to rest that first night in a little hostelry

occupied by the Spanish embassy. Five years of heart-sickness, exile, and bondage ! Five years stolen from the very summer-time of his life ! Five long, long years—so long that, to look back upon them, they seemed like twenty !

Free though he was, Cervantes was yet unable to return at once to his native country. He had to wait for a ship, in the first place ; and there were but few vessels regularly authorized to carry ransomed prisoners to and fro between Spain and the coast of Africa. In the next place, he exerted himself to assist the commissioners of redemption in their work of mercy, and devoted several weeks to visiting the prisons, collecting particulars of cases from the captives themselves, and endeavouring, from his own scanty purse, to alleviate their sufferings. At the same time, he took the opportunity to collect testimonials of his own conduct during the five years that he had lain in the Bagnios of Algiers ; believing that they might advance his interest with the king, and strengthen his chances of promotion. Almost worshipped, as he was, by his fellow sufferers, he found these testimonials pour in upon his hands in such numbers, that he scarcely knew how to dispose of them. Probably no captive ever returned to Spain with such credentials, or left so many friends behind

him. The obscurer slaves bore grateful witness to his unwearying charity, his sympathy with them in sickness, and his universal benevolence. The nobler prisoners testified their admiration of his high mental and moral qualities, his gallantry, magnanimity, and unblemished honour. Dr. Sosa, and some other captive priests, certified that he had been, "during this period, most punctual and exact in all the religious duties of a Catholic Christian ; and that the fervour of his zeal, and his knowledge of the grounds of his faith, assisted him many times in defending his religion at the risk of his life ; and in imparting the same spirit to the timid and disheartened."

It was, in fact, for this purpose solely, and on this occasion, in the month of October, 1580, that Dr. Antonio Sosa wrote that narrative to which of late we have so frequently had occasion to allude.

* * * * *

On a misty November evening, about seven weeks from the time of Miguel's release, a party of four persons was assembled in a large and barely-furnished sitting-room, on the second floor of a gloomy old house, in a still more gloomy street, in the north

quarter of Madrid. They had evidently tried to make the place look as pleasant as they could. A bright wood-fire blazed upon the hearth. Some old tapestries of faded serge had been nailed against the walls, and a few autumnal flowers, placed here and there in antique china vases, helped to give an air of somewhat cheerless festivity to the dull room. The party consisted of a white-haired widow, two younger ladies, and a bronzed soldierly man of about thirty-four or five years of age. Possessed, apparently, by a nervous impatience over which he had no control, this man kept pacing to and fro between the window and the door; only pausing now and then to listen with suspended breath, or fling a fresh log on the fire. Equally nervous, but subduing their nervousness to a semblance of self-possession, the younger ladies sat together by the window, whispering anxiously from time to time, and peering out into the dark street below whenever a horseman clattered past, or a foot-patrol with measured step went by. The only one who neither spoke nor stirred was the white-haired widow, who, with hands fast locked, and eyes fixed on the fire, sat, pale and silent, in her high-backed chair.

Thus a long time went by, and the outer darkness gathered closer, and the city grew more silent, and

the church bells chimed the quarters sadly and solemnly, with voices muffled in the mist, like the voices of mourners. Then, as the hours went on, the sisters ceased to whisper; the soldier flung himself into a chair, and buried his face gloomily in his hands; the fire was left unreplenished, and the lamp untrimmed; but the widow still sat in the same attitude, motionless as a statue on a tomb. They remained thus till within a few minutes of midnight, waiting still, but hoping no longer.

Suddenly, in the midst of the silence—a silence so profound that even the gentle falling of the wood-ashes was distinctly audible—a distant sound as of a horse approaching at full speed—a sound growing every instant nearer and louder—was heard at the same moment by all present. The soldier started to his feet—the sisters seized each other by the hand—the old lady, still looking stedfastly into the fire, moved her lips silently, as if in prayer.

Yes, yes, the sound draws nearer—nearer still! Their hearts tell them what it is. Have they not been listening for it these five long years, and more?

Hark! It is at the door—it slackens—it stops—there is a voice in the hall—there is a step on the stairs—there is a figure on the threshold Oh, heaven! it is he at last, and the white-haired

mother, who has so prayed to see him once again before she dies, is folded in his arms !

Could the Spanish people have known, three centuries ago, all that they, and we, know now upon the subject, methinks they would that night have rung every bell in Madrid—ay, and have fired every cannon, to boot—to do honour to the returned wanderer, Miguel de Cervantes !

CHAPTER XXIII.

A prologue to a picture-gallery.

THE old Elizabethan playwrights, when they found it expedient briefly to pass over any number of incidents in the career of their *dramatis personæ*, had a pleasant fashion of sending an actor before the curtain to relate them. This actor was dressed to represent Time, Rumour, Envy, or some such allegorical character ; and he spoke his speech in verse. In imitation of those still older dramatists, the Greek poets, he was designated, in a general sense, by the name of Chorus.

Alas ! were this little story a play in five acts, instead of a tale in a great many chapters, we should now very gladly furnish Monsieur Chorus with a speech, and send him down to the footlights to repeat it. But that cannot be. Here are neither stage, nor actors, nor spectators ; and the author, like many another author under similar circumstances, must attempt, however imperfectly and prosaically, to supply the place of that quaint, but useful interpreter.

In the first place, then, be it observed that, for

genuine and authentic detail, we have very nearly come to the end of our resources in this story of Cervantes. History, henceforth, takes note of his career at capricious intervals, meagrely mapping out his course from time to time, often losing sight of him for years together, and but very seldom preserving for us those minute and familiar traits which give its chief value to biographical portraiture. The years immediately following upon his release from Algiers in 1580, up to about 1598 or 1600, when he began to write "Don Quixote," are among the most obscure, and the least interesting of his life. Here and there, perhaps, we meet with an incident of travel or military service which, however dryly narrated by the historian, calls up a sudden picture before the "mind's eye" of the reader. Sometimes we come upon a fact with which we have been familiar long ago, in the pages of some of Cervantes' own dramas or romances, and are pleased to find how the poet loved to draw upon his past experience. Yet these are but infrequent chances, and can scarcely be said even to relieve the monotony of much dull reading. Such as they are, we (in the character of Chorus) will do our best to present them to the reader; putting them before him like cosmoramic glimpses snatched from the gloom of history.

Before we undraw the curtain, however, we have another word or two of prologue to deliver.

Cold, bigoted, ambitious of conquest, and alike absorbed in the consolidation of his own power and the extermination of the Protestant religion, Philip II. of Spain suffered his conscience to be governed by priests, and his funds to be administered by favourites. From such a course, only the rankest injustice could be expected to arise. Brave soldiers who had devoted all their lives to the service of the state,—who had taken part in battles which were the glory of Spain,—who had exposed themselves again and again to slavery and death, were left unrewarded and unpromoted to the close of their days. Men of letters who, in other lands, would have been welcomed at the council-tables of kings, were allowed to languish in debtors' prisons, or starve in garrets. Painters who in England, Italy, or France, would have been ennobled and enriched, found themselves neglected, and their art only valued as it adorned the chapel of a convent, or the oratory of a noble. In the meantime political faction, favouritism, and bribery, regulated the distribution of patronage at court. The Duke of Lerma, who was the King's prime minister, literally "held the fortunes of all Spaniards in his hands." Of uncultivated mind, imperious temper, and reckless

prodigality, this nobleman employed his power with as much injustice as ignorance. High civil and military dignities were conferred by him upon men who were neither acquainted with politics nor war. Distant governorships were bestowed upon youths who had never travelled beyond Salamanca; naval commands upon courtiers who had never seen the sea; collegiate preferments upon dissolute younger sons, who knew no more Latin than their paternosters. Under such circumstances, we need no longer be surprised that Cervantes was suffered to lie for so many years in the dungeons of Algiers. We cannot even wonder when we learn that liberty and the proud consciousness of an honourable life were his only rewards after such heavy tribulation. Ay, it was even so. Mutilated as he was; captive as he had been; furnished with testimonials signed by nearly a hundred names, and supported by the commendations of his old commander the Duke of Sesa, Miguel de Cervantes received no kind of indemnity, no fraction of reward from the Spanish authorities. No; not so much as a metal cross—not so much as even the paltry grade of sergeant in the regiment to which he had so long been attached as a volunteer.

And now, it will be asked, what course did he pursue towards this ungrateful government? He

declined, doubtless, ever to draw sword again in its defence? Sat down, probably, to pen satires against favourites or petitions to the King? Or, perhaps, shook the dust from off his feet at the gates of Madrid, and carried his good right arm and active brain to the service of some wiser sovereign?

Nothing of the kind. There never lived a man with less of personal conceit than Miguel Cervantes. He knew that he had deserved better treatment; but he also knew that others were as much neglected as himself, and by no means rated his own merits and grievances at a higher ratio than theirs. On the contrary, having presented his credentials, and found that neither King nor ministers were disposed to do anything in his favour, he just turned a cheerful face upon the future, and asked himself what he should do for a living. His mother and sisters implored him to stay at home and devote himself to literature. His brother urged him to rejoin the army, and help to conquer Portugal for King Philip. Once again he hesitated between the sword and the pen, and again decided on the sword.

"If I take service under the Muses," said he, "I shall certainly starve; and starvation is not amusing. If I take service under Figueroa, I shall at all events live; and if at the expense

of my enemies, so much the better! *Va pour la guerre !*"

And so, having once more taken a loving farewell of home and its dear inmates, he rejoined his old regiment under his old commander, and in the summer of 1581 embarked with the forces sent out to protect the Spanish merchant vessels, and attack the islands of the Azores; then a possession of the Portuguese crown.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Picture Glimpses.

LET us take, for our first glimpse, the island of Terceira. It is not a very mighty territory ; being, indeed, scarce fifty miles in circumference. But it is a place of some "mark and likelihood," nevertheless, and presides over a group of still smaller islands, like a whale among the minnows. These tiny oases in the great sea-desert are called by the collective name of the Azores. They lie considerably less than halfway between the Portuguese coast and the North American continent ; and at the time which we are now supposing, are garrisoned by the allied troops of Portugal and France.

It is a glorious Midsummer's day of the year 1583. Tranquil as a lake, the great ocean reaches to the uttermost horizon on every side, reflecting the white clouds that travel slowly by in long procession, and breaking into foamy waves upon the rock-bound islands at our feet. Yonder, where the surf runs highest, lies Terceira. Approached by a crescent-shaped harbour between two lofty mountains, bristling

with forts and battlemented walls, and protected by far-stretching reefs of sunken rocks, over which the sea boils and frets unresistingly, this island would appear impregnable as Gibraltar. Inland we see dim outlines of fertile corn-fields, and sloping downs pastured by herds of half-tame oxen ; while, nearer, low-lying in the shelter of the forts and the mountains, nestle the spires, pinnacles, tiled roofs, and white-walled convents of Angra, which is the chief town and seaport of the Azores.

To-day, bright Midsummer though it be, there is gloom in Angra. The market-place is empty ; the quays are deserted ; the windows of the dwelling-houses are closely shuttered up ; and, from time to time, the church-bells are mournfully tolling. But for these bells, one might believe it a city of the dead. There is not a living soul in the streets. There is not even a fishing bark out upon the tranquil sea. They are all moored in a little cove on the other side of the island, and the fishers are on their knees in the churches. Down yonder, however, among the forts and batteries, there is no lack of men. Drawn up along all the length of the battlemented walls, posted in little knots at every gun, the Portuguese and French soldiers occupy every inch of the great ramparts which line the harbour and command the sea.

There they stand, like men of painted stone, with the sunlight glittering on their helmets; armed, silent, steady, and compact—their own a living fortification.

And now, from behind the lofty headlands of the neighbouring isle of Santa Maria, a huge war galleon heaves slowly into sight, her deck crowded with armed soldiers, and the Spanish eagle flying at her masthead. She is followed by another, and another, and another, till a fleet of twelve have assembled together in the straits between Santa Maria and Terceira. Unable to venture in among the rocks and shallows, and driven back from the mouth of the harbour by the raging surf, the galleons form in line of battle, and fire a broadside of defiance. The batteries at each extremity of the harbour return the fire. Both, however, are beyond gunshot range, and the balls fall harmlessly into the sea, half-way between the ships and the forts. Now the galleys lower boats—the soldiers pour down the gangways—the sailors seize their oars, and pull manfully towards the middle of the harbour. Thrice they are driven back by the fury of the waves. The besieged raise a shout of triumph. No ship, no boat, need ever hope, unpiloted, to pass that harbour-bar of nature's own building. But, hark! the shout is answered. The Spanish officers

rise up in their places, wave their caps, and jump, sword in hand, into the surging sea. The soldiers follow them, to a man. The sea is covered with swimmers. They rise and fall with the waves ; they heed not the balls that whistle over their heads. One by one, they struggle forward—leap on shore—climb the ramparts, and, though repulsed with fearful slaughter, return again and again ; till, having planted the Spanish flag upon the walls, they take possession of a fort, turn the enemy's own guns against himself, and achieve a complete victory !

This action is known in history as the famous battle of the Azores ; and the first men who leaped that day into the sea were three thousand seven hundred of Figueroa's veteran troops. Among these, one of the foremost was Miguel Cervantes. He wrote a sonnet upon the battle, years afterwards ; which sonnet may yet be found by the curious in an antiquated account of the capture of the Azores, written and published by a certain licentiate Cristobel Mosquera de Figueroa, of whom time would seem to have preserved no more than his book, and his name.

Another glimpse, and we are back again in Africa ; this time, however, at Mostagan, a fortified seaport, the property of the Spanish crown. Here, towards

the latter end of 1583, we find Cervantes, who has been sent from Madrid with despatches to the governor of the fort. Detained month after month, he wearies hourly of the monotonous garrison life, and of the profitless slavery of the sword. The place, too, reminds him painfully of Algiers. The same burning sky glows overhead. The same restless blue sea, beating against the same barrier of white rock and tawny sand, lies ever before him. To wile away the tedious hours, and divert his thoughts from the sad prison-scenes to which they keep recurring, he amuses himself by writing a romance. Having begun it (in pure idleness, observe, and without the least thought of ever even finishing it), he becomes interested in the task, takes it up each day with increasing pleasure, and ends by devoting himself to it heart and soul, like an author "to the manner born."

The story is a pastoral, and he calls it "Galatea." It is composed in the false taste of that age, and relates the loves, travels, and misfortunes of a shepherd named Elicio and a fair shepherdess named Galatea, who both dwell on the banks of the Tagus, and are as beautiful and unhappy as the most exacting novel-reader could desire. It is doubtful if we could read the book at all nowadays. The taste for pastoral has gone by, and we moderns find it impossible to be

interested in a race of imaginary beings who never could have existed under any circumstances, and who, if they did exist, would have as little affinity with the rest of humankind as a nation of Dresden china figures. They had their day, however, and it lasted long, and it has set, we devoutly hope, for ever. The "Galatea" of Cervantes lies side by side with the "Arcadia" of Sir Philip Sydney, the "Grand Cyrus" of Mademoiselle de Scuderi, and many another long forgotten folio. Peace be with them, and the reverend dust of antique libraries lie light upon them !

It is pleasant, however, to fancy Cervantes at his work, beguiling the sultry hours there, in Mostagan. Let us picture him sitting alone in some little upper chamber of a tower looking to the sea ; his papers before him on the table, his sword and cuirass hanging behind the door, and, perhaps, a little black crucifix beside his bed, and a flower on the table. The flower will probably be a gorgeous cactus blossom, tasselled and crimson, like a Moorish *fez*.

On he writes, rapidly and boldly, often dashing his pen through a sentence, seldom pausing, and tossing the pages on the floor beside him as he goes on. Presently he lays the pen down, and seems to be lost in thought. One might take his portrait as he sits

thus : one arm—the maimed one—hanging idly down ; the other elbow resting on the table, and his head supported by his hand. He is now just thirty-six years of age. His hair is chestnut-coloured, with a dash of gold bronzing where the crisp curls catch the light. His forehead is lofty and open ; his complexion clear ; his nose high and curved like an eagle's beak, but by no means disproportionately large, with delicate nostrils that expand and quiver when he is earnest or angry, like the nostrils of a war-horse. His mouth is small and delicately curved ; his smile is singularly sweet, and his beard would be quite golden but for a thread of silver that peeps out here and there. The great charm of his face, however, lies in his eyes, which are large, dark, and animated without being restless. "I hate an eye that twinkles like a star," writes a modern poet ; but Cervantes' eyes were not in the least like stars. They had more of the serene and steady radiance of the planets, and could be tender as well as brilliant "upon occasion." Just now, even as we are looking at them, they wander towards the window, and seem suddenly to grow quite sad and abstracted. He sighs, pushes back his chair, rises, throws the lattice open wider, and leans out into the air. He remains thus for a long time, gazing fixedly at the sea. He is

thinking, perhaps, of the Spanish coast, far, far away, across those wastes of blue ; or, it may be, remembering how his heart ached and his eyes grew dim when he so gazed towards home from his prison in Algiers.

And now a quick voice and a clang of steel arouse his attention. They are relieving guard on the ramparts some forty feet below his window ; and the fierce African sun glares down upon the paved yards and white walls of the fort, and flashes on the accoutrements of the soldiers, as if it would wither them to ashes on the spot. Cervantes draws back quickly, and closes the lattice with a gesture that may imply impatience, or disgust, or perhaps both. It will be his turn to go the rounds by-and-by, buckled up in leather and steel, as if climate were a mere imaginary condition, or the soldier a patent machine ingeniously constructed of asbestos.

Heigho ! let us, 'at least, make the most of the time which is our own, calling up pleasant images of groves and brooks, uplands where the bees haunt in the thyme-banks ; rose-thickets where beautiful shepherdesses retire to write sonnets and sing cazonets ; and old mossy oaks, upon whose gnarled roots sit innocent shepherd-boys "piping as though they should never grow old."

By St. Jago, this life of the sword hath grown strangely wearisome ! Methinks fourteen years of it are enough especially without promotion.

Our next peep must be into the gardens of a private villa at Esquivias, near Madrid. The place is one which, could he have been born fifty years earlier and have travelled to Spain to see it, would have delighted the heart of our English Cowley. He confessed that it had been his life-long desire to possess "a small house with a large garden ;" and this villa at Esquivias answers precisely to the description. It is one storey high ; the rooms are few, and the furniture is neither particularly rich nor particularly tasteful. But the grounds are large, well laid out, traversed by winding walks, and shaded by fine old trees. Both house and garden are the property of one Don Francisco de Salazar, a worthy old bachelor of moderate means and honourable descent, who lives there with his widowed sister and her only daughter, Catalina, whom he has adopted and educated.

Let us suppose that it is the month of October, A.D. 1584. The day has been unusually warm and bright, even for Spain, at this season ; and the sun is going down like a shield of fire, glowing through

the close trunks of the eastward trees, and casting long lines of steadfast light across the open sward. Under the verandah, in front of the little white villa, sit five persons—a portly, cheerful old gentleman with a peaked grey beard, and a cheek wrinkled and ruddy as a winter apple; an equally portly and cheerful-looking elderly lady, who knits, and talks, and laughs as merrily as a girl of eighteen; another and much older lady, with a sad and dignified face, and very white hair; and two younger women, dark-haired, dark-eyed, and olive-skinned; true daughters of Spain. We have already recognized the three last as the mother and sisters of Cervantes. The portly old gentleman and the lively old lady are Don Francisco de Salazar and his widowed sister, Donna Palacios. Before them stands a table with wine, fruit, and coffee, and the chequered shadows of the vine leaves fall upon them where they sit.

They are talking of Miguel. His sisters, pardonably proud of a brother whom they adore, tell of his valour at Lepanto and Terceira, and love to relate how the prisoners honoured, and the Pasha feared him, at Algiers. His mother, remembering how he suffered, sighs when they speak of glory, and is silent. Presently Don Francisco brings a book from his pocket. It is "Galatea,"—the pastoral romance

written at Mostagan nearly a year ago. This little volume is just published, and has already made the fame of its writer. All the wits and poets of the court are loud in its praise, and those who know the author amuse themselves by discovering, or fancying that they discover, among the shepherds and shepherdesses of the story, not only Miguel himself and all his family, but portraits of every living celebrity in Spain.

The book is no sooner brought forth than the conversation takes a fresh turn. The sisters remind each other of a thousand half-forgotten traits of their brother's boyhood. How, as a young child, he stole away to scribble stories and read books of chivalry ; how he wrote that unfortunate romance of "Don Florianus," and ran off to Segovia with Lope de Rueda ; how he was afterwards known throughout Salamanca for his epigrams, and wrote the best elegiac poem on Queen Isabel—all these things are remembered, and told to loving listeners as the sun goes down and the tender twilight creeps up through the trees in that garden at Esquivias. Then the elder sister takes the book, and reads aloud a sonnet from its pages ; for there is as much poetry as prose scattered through the tale, and the type is large, and it is not yet too dusk to see.

Just as she has read the last line, a moving shadow is seen among the poplars, and two persons, a lady and a gentleman, come slowly up from the farther end of the garden. The lady is tall and graceful, and holds her mantilla across her bosom with one hand, while she rests the other on the arm of her companion. Twilight though it be, we can see that she is young and very lovely. As for the gentleman, we know him, at a glance, for Miguel de Cervantes. He now wears the close dark dress of a civilian ; for he has left the army, and is a soldier no longer. That lady is Catalina, the niece of Don Francisco, and the daughter of Donna Palacios. See how he bends down and murmurs in her ear, as if he would not suffer even the birds among the boughs to overhear him. See how he puts the leaves aside, lest they should brush against her dress—how his breath seems to come and go when she is speaking !

“Tush ! the book is but a book, after all,” says Don Francisco, as he laughs and fills another glass of Amontillado ; “but yonder is the real romance, my children—the only real romance, depend on it !”

And so it is. The romance of Cervantes’ life has come at last, after so many years of hard battling with the world. The steel is put off for ever ; the

sword hangs up to rust. He loves ; and the Paradise of home is opening before him.

Another picture.

We see the interior of a little antique church, and a group of people standing before the altar. A wintry sunbeam slants faintly through an upper window of old stained glass, and falls, like a halo, on the amber stole and shaven head of the priest. Face to face with him, just beyond the sunlight, stands a young lady, clothed from head to foot in a long white veil, and a gentleman who holds her by the hand. Close behind them, still deeper in shadow, is gathered a group of some six or eight older persons, and beyond these the church lies all in gloom. Down in the deep twilight of the side isles there are a few candles feebly flickering before the shrines of Saint Anne and Saint Jerome. The air of the church is heavy with incense. Now and then the voices of the priests and the acolytes blend together in a few words of chanted Latin ; now and then a tender chord, or a silvery flute-like passage, is breathed forth from an unseen organ behind the oaken stalls in the choir. Presently a bell rings. Those before the altar fall upon their knees ; the priest holds up his hands, invoking the marriage

blessing ; the voices of the choristers break into a glad hymn of rejoicing ; and the deep soul of the organ is poured forth in a flood of harmony, like the rolling of a mighty sea !

It is the twelfth day of December, 1584, and we are spectators of the ceremony of marriage between Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra, and Catalina de Palacios Salazar y Vozmediano, daughter of Fernando de Salazar y Vozmediano, deceased, and of Catalina de Palacios ; both descended from honourable families of Esquivias, near Madrid.

We are no longer in a church, but in a theatre. This theatre (the largest in Madrid) is so unlike those of the present day, that we must devote a few moments to examining it in detail.

In the first place, it is not called a theatre, but a *Corrale*, which means literally a courtyard. In the second, it is almost square in shape, which is a national peculiarity, and only to be met with in Spain. Antiquaries affirm that the earliest Spanish dramas, when Lope de Rueda was a boy, were ordinarily performed in the courtyards of private palaces, inns, and other open places ; whence the improved theatre of the time of Cervantes derived both its shape and name. This square edifice is built

entirely of wood. Outside, it looks like a barn, but inside, displays some meagre attempt at decoration. Three rows of railed galleries, corresponding to three rows of modern boxes, run along the sides and across the upper end of the hall. These galleries are divided off in compartments, one of which is occupied only by women, one by priests, and one by the corregidores, or lieutenants of police. For the pit, or body of the hall, there are no seats. None but men, and those only of the poorer classes, frequent this part of the *Corrale*. At the upper end of the hall, somewhat higher than the pit, but lower than the level of the first gallery, the stage is erected. A curtain of dark crimson, which works by means of large rings upon a pole, and reaches about half way to the ceiling, conceals the scene; and the musicians, as usual, are out of sight.

We will suppose ourselves to be among the spectators in one of these galleries. The crowd of soldiers, students, muleteers, and other "groundlings," as an old poet called them, has poured into the pit, after waiting nearly two hours at the door. The dark-eyed Spanish beauties, with their fans and mantillas, fill one of the central galleries. A sombre crowd of abbates, inquisitors, lawyers, notaries public, and other dark-robed functionaries, occupy

another compartment. A miscellaneous company of officers, noblemen, and gentlemen throng all the rest of the seats ; and the entrances and staircases are kept by sentinels, who admit no person without a ticket. The theatre is imperfectly lighted by rows of oil lamps suspended along the galleries, which fill the air with an abominable odour, and leave half the building in darkness. The floor of the pit is strewn with sand, and the stage with rushes. The spectators talk, laugh, smoke, spit, and eat sweetmeats in all parts of the house indiscriminately. Presently, a bell is rung, and the musicians behind the stage begin to play ; but nobody listens, and the performance ends without having been heard. Then a trumpet is sounded ; a chair is placed upon the stage on the side to the left of the audience, and the Alcayde de Corto, whose official duty it is to be present at all theatrical performances, enters, accompanied by two of his officers. He seats himself, the officers take up their position behind his chair, the signal is given, and the curtain rises.

The piece, according to the hand-bill, is a tragedy called "El Trato de Argel"; or "Life in Algiers," and purports to be written by the author of "Galatea." Now, and not till now, the hubbub subsides into a deep under-current of murmured conversation ; and

throughout the first scene or two people leave off discussing the last victory, or the last bull-fight, to gossip, somewhat in this fashion, about the author of the play which they have come to witness :—

"You have read the 'Galatea,' doubtless?"

"Why, yes—in parts. But there are so many new books now-a-days that we had need live a quarter of a century longer than our forefathers."

"That is true—and there is even talk of a news-journal to be printed and published twice a week in Madrid! Ten years ago we should have laughed at such a scheme. But have you seen the Señor Cervantes?"

"Yes—I met him at the house of Juan Velasco, the secretary of council of land revenue. A personable man, truly, and a poet of whom Spain may be proud! Some of the sonnets and redondillas of the 'Galatea' might fairly meet a comparison with the pastorals of Garcilaso de Vega."

"Hath been a soldier, hath he not?"

"Ay; and lost a hand at Lepanto. Yonder's his wife—do you mark her? That beautiful woman at the corner of the cazuela.* . . . Money? Oh, no—quite a love-marriage. She was Salazar's adopted

* The ladies' gallery at a theatre.

daughter, and he gave her, 'tis said, but a hundred ducats when she married."

"And the king hath granted no pension to this Señor Cervantes?"

"Not a maravedi. He holds now, however, some small government office under the commissary-general; but 'tis a paltry matter, and bringeth him no more than three thousand rials * by the year."

"I' faith, a niggardly guerdon! No wonder that the state is ill-served, when brave men are thus forgotten. I have heard that he was in slavery among the Moors."

"Ay, that was he, indeed, for five long years. This piece, doubtless, doth set forth much of his own story. Hush! Here is Zapata."

A tempest of applause breaks forth simultaneously from all parts of the theatre as Zapata makes his entrance upon the stage, and is succeeded by a profound silence. Till now, no real attention has been paid to the piece by any but the poorer part of the audience; but the favourite actor at once effects what the poet had failed to command.

The plot of the play is simple enough. Two Christian lovers, named Aurelio and Sylvia, have

* About £100, English.

been enslaved and carried to Algiers. Sylvia is purchased by the Dey, who persecutes her for her beauty, and desires to place her in his seraglio. Aurelio becomes the property of a Moorish princess, named Zara, who employs enchantments to win his love and convert him to Mahometanism. To the development of this double situation, the early scenes are devoted. The language is poetical, but declamatory. The soliloquies and speeches are somewhat long. The audience listens coldly, and the connoisseurs whisper criticisms when Zapata is not on the stage.

"This Cervantes is a delightful pastoral poet," says one; "but methinks he would do well not to stray beyond the bounds of Arcadia."

"The dramatic and idyllic powers differ essentially," observes another, "and are seldom to be found conjoined together."

"He hath not sufficiently applied himself unto the study of Greek models," adds a third, very sagaciously.

Presently, however, the scene is supposed to change to the slave-market. A Christian family, consisting of a father, mother, and two children, are seen crouched in a corner of the stage. Sailors and merchants walk to and fro, and a public crier offers the Christians for sale. The mother clasps her children

in her arms ; while the father, firm in faith, prays aloud that they may, at least, be all sold together. While he is yet speaking, a merchant steps forward, takes the younger boy from his mother's embrace, and forces him to open his mouth, as one would open the mouth of a young colt. The child bursts into tears.

"I have no tooth that aches, sir," he cries, piteously ; dreading lest the stranger should be about to extract one, and little dreaming, alas ! of the grief so near at hand.

By this touch of nature, the whole audience is suddenly affected. The women sob aloud ; the men draw their hands hastily across their eyes ; the critics forget the Greek models. It is as if a sorrowful hand had been laid on every heart in the theatre. The child is then sold for one hundred and thirty piastres, and the act closes upon the anguish of the parents. From this moment, the play is successful. Aurelio and Sylvia, faithful under every trial, and Alvarez, their friend and fellow-captive, who escapes to the desert and is rescued by the special intervention of the Virgin of Montserrat, carry the sympathies of the spectators along with them, till, at the close of the last act, a monk of the Trinity arrives from Spain with money and jewels for the redemption of the sufferers. The

prisoners then fall upon their knees ; Aurelio and Sylvia rush into each other's arms ; the good monk stands amidst them with uplifted hands ; the curtain falls, and the piece is ended.

"Cervantes ! Cervantes !" resounds now from every corner of the theatre. "Bravo, Cervantes !" Even the Alcayde, from his chair of honour, taps the floor softly with his cane, and nods approval. Even the trio of critics clap their hands, and admit that the play is worth applauding. Then the curtain is pushed aside, and a pale, soldierly-looking man, who keeps his left arm muffled in his cloak, and is dressed all in sober black and violet, steps forward—bows to the right and left—draws back—is recalled—bows again and again—presses his right hand, with a singularly dignified and graceful gesture, to his heart, and so retires.

He is very happy at that moment, and his heart beats high with a poet's triumph ; but he is no whit happier than that lady in the corner-seat of the cazuela, whose eyes filled up with tears of joy when he was called forth to receive the general homage, and who now weeps silently behind her veil.

Oh, the sweet, sweet pride that knows no thought of self, and exists only in and for another !

Quietly rotting away under the accumulated dust of centuries, or crumbling 'into nothingness beneath the slow tooth of the book-worm, might yet, perhaps, be found—if one had the patience to look for them—some copies of a curious old pamphlet written in 1595 by one Geronimo Martel, a citizen of Saragossa, and published by Lorenzo Robles, of the city of Aragon.

The best places to search would be the libraries of antique Spanish convents, where the monks doze away their lives between sleeping and praying, and the dust of the bookshelves is never disturbed from New Year's Day to December.

There are scores of such dreamy old monasteries in the far provinces of Spain, lying low in rich valleys ; or walled in in the hearts of great cities ; or perched, high and white, upon the slopes of sultry mountains, like nests full of brown birds : and a lover of strange lore might wander pleasantly enough from one to another, on some such fanciful quest as this of Señor Geronimo's pamphlet.

We can picture him jogging along the dusty road on his rough-coated mule, with a book in one hand and an umbrella in the other, and a bottle of Val de Penas swinging at his saddle-bow.

We can imagine how he arrives towards twilight at some lichen-grown convent gateway—how the good monks come out and make him welcome—how he shares their supper of stewed quails and garlic, with a slice of melon to finish, perhaps, and a draught of country wine—how he sleeps in a neat little cell, from the window of which he looks down upon a star-lighted valley, or a range of purple mountains—and how, next morning, he rises with the matin bell, says his prayers in the convent chapel, and is shown, after breakfast, into the little dark room behind the refectory, which they call their library. Here are shelves piled up with old leather-coated volumes, and festooned with spiders' webs. Here are great iron-clasped chests with lids like prison-doors, and huge wrought locks covered with quaint devices.

Conceive the delight of our book-lover, with all these musty treasures at his disposal! We see him turn up his cuffs, open chest after chest, take down book after book, blow the dust off the edges of the leaves, and carefully brush it from the precious covers as he goes along. Now he opens an old parchment charter, with a big seal dangling to it by a triple thread; now a thin volume bound in vellum, and covered with blue mildew—probably

an illuminated book of hours, or a collection of monkish legends, all fairly written out by some studious member of the fraternity, whose very name has been forgotten these two hundred years or more ; now comes a bundle of religious discourses, the writing almost illegible ; now some more mouldy deeds ; a collection of "Lives of the Saints," bound in carved wood, and clasped with iron ; some odd volumes of Latin poets ; and so on, till every nook has been ransacked, and he is satisfied that the object of his pilgrimage is yet unattained. Later in the afternoon, having dined with the superior, he mounts his mule again, jogs on to the next convent, and there pursues his labour of love after precisely the same fashion.

At length there comes a day when he finds the long-sought pamphlet, and his hopes are suddenly and unexpectedly rewarded. Yes, he finds it—no matter where. Perhaps at the bottom of one of those old muniment chests ; perhaps at the back of a shelf in some country gentleman's library ; perhaps in the pack of a travelling pedlar ; or, perhaps, on a bookstall in some shady alley at the back of a college in Salamanca.

There it is, at all events—a small, shabby, ill-printed, ill-written treatise, but genuine withal, and

a very curious piece of mediæval dulness and superstition.

A Narrative of the Solemnities and Festivities celebrated by the Dominican Confraternity of the city of Saragossa, in honour of the Canonization of Saint Jacinto, with the Prize Poem of Senor Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra, author of "Galatea," "Life in Algiers," &c., &c.

It is not our intention to inflict the substance or contents of that pamphlet upon the present generation. We have but to deal with that which concerns Cervantes, and to relate, as briefly as may be, the circumstances which gave rise to his new poem.

In the year 1595, then, his Holiness, Pope Clement VIII., at the desire of the king of Poland, consented to the canonization of a certain St. Jacinto—though what St. Jacinto had done to deserve that honour or why his Polish Majesty took upon himself to make the request, are facts respecting which this chronicler is profoundly ignorant. In celebration, however, of the fact, the Dominican monks of Saragossa held a solemn festival for three days, in the month of April in that year, and proclaimed a literary contest throughout the whole province of Aragon, with an especial challenge to the Universities of Salamanca and Alcala de Henares.

Perhaps because he was a native of Alcala and a

graduate of Salamanca—or, perhaps, because any literary contest is pleasant when one is conscious of power, Cervantes condescended to compete on this occasion ; the subject being a redondilla in praise of the new saint, and the prizes being three silver spoons for the best poem, two yards of dark coloured taffeta silk for the next best, and for the third a gold time-piece. On the 29th of April, 1595, the poems were sent in ; and on the 2nd of May, according to the veracious pamphlet of Señor Geronimo before mentioned, the competitors assembled immediately after vespers in the Church of the Convent, and were accommodated with seats all down the central nave. The rest of the church was crowded in every part. The friars sat in the stalls ; the judges occupied a raised dais to the left of the altar ; and a celebrated preacher read the verses aloud for the benefit of both judges and public. The first prize was then solemnly awarded to Miguel de Cervantes, who stepped forward to receive it, and was addressed by the presiding judge in a grand poetical speech, wherein Alcala de Henares was compared to Delos, and Cervantes himself to no less illustrious a deity than Apollo.

For all which information, we have to thank Señor Geronimo Martel and his curious old pamphlet of 1595.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Don Quixote."

DESTINED all his life to poverty, and scarce able, despite every effort, to keep himself clear of serious pecuniary difficulty, Cervantes struggled on, year after year, accepting whatever honest employment he could get, and devoting all his leisure to literature. During the years 1591 and 1592, he held a subordinate post in the office of the Commissary-General; and in 1594 obtained the King's permission to act as one of his Majesty's collectors of revenue in the provinces. Having faithfully and punctually fulfilled his duties in this capacity up to the year 1597, he was dismissed from his employment for no other reason than that he had entrusted the transmission of a small sum to a merchant named Freire, who failed and absconded from Madrid, but who left property to more than the amount. Upon this property the government immediately seized, by special mandate, and repaid itself; but discharged Cervantes, nevertheless, and imprisoned him for fourteen days in the debtors' prison at Madrid. After this, he is supposed to have depended

for some time partly on private agencies, and partly upon his pen. His tragedy of "Life in Algiers;" another written about the same time, called "Numantia;" his "Galatea," and other writings, chiefly stories and short poems, continued to be popular, and brought him, from time to time, some trifling addition to his means. His wife's uncle had died also, and bequeathed them a small legacy; and one of his sisters had married, and so was no longer dependent on his exertions. Thus he fought on in the weary battle of life, a mere foot-soldier still, and ever in the van. Alas! had it not been for the sweet sunshine of love about his hearth, how utterly hopeless and unrewarded a life it would have been! Hero and poet as he was, could he have borne up so gallantly against neglect and injustice had he been alone? Would not his arm have fallen powerless to his side, and his voice have died away into silence, long since?

La Mancha! No province in Spain is better known to us by name and description: no province in Spain is so unattractive in itself, and so interesting in its associations. It is a treeless, tawny district, bleached by the winds, dried by the sun, dotted over with sordid villages of mud huts, and interspersed here and

there with stunted vineyards, fields of saffron and corn, and little solitary clusters of cork-trees and palms. Deep in the very heart of the province lies the little town of Argamasilla, with its two churches, its magistrate, its schoolhouse, its notary public, its market-place, and its fountain. Close against the market-place stands a square house built of grey stone, called *De Medrano*, which serves for the prison; but it is seldom inhabited, unless by a stray gipsy caught in the act of sheepstealing, or by three or four drunken rustics on fair-days and festivals.

We are in La Mancha, then, at the remote country town of Argamasilla; and it is somewhere about the middle of summer, *Anno Domini* 1599, or 1600, or perhaps 1601—for history has left the date uncertain. The townspeople have gathered here and there in little angry knots about the market-place, and at the thresholds of their dwellings.

“Tax-collector, indeed!” says one. “Enough that we pay the King’s taxes, I should think, without being called upon for more by these greedy priests. Let the Grand Prior of St. Juan take what tithe we can spare from year to year, and be thankful. What business has he to demand arrears, I should like to know?”

‘What business has he, say I, to send round his

collector, just as if he were King Philip himself?" ejaculates another. "I'll see his collector burned alive before he shall have a maravedi of mine!"

"Things have come to a pretty pass, when priests lord it over us thus, methinks!" says a third.

"I'll be hanged if I pay!"

"Or I!"

"Or I!"

"Let us give the collector a ducking!"

"Tie him up to the whipping-post!"

"Put him in the pillory, and send his ears to the Grand Prior!"

And thus, excited by their mutual vociferations, the little knots of malcontents merge one into another, become a roaring surging stream, and pour by one consent in the direction of the magistrate's house; where the magistrate himself and the notary-public are at that very moment engaged in angry discussion with the unlucky object of the riot.

"A most annoying proceeding on the part of the Grand Prior, Señor," says the magistrate; "and as unusual as it is annoying."

"Likewise an illegal proceeding," observes the notary-public, very solemnly.

The envoy of the Grand Prior of St. Juan smiles and shrugs his shoulders. He is a very handsome,

gentlemanly man, and has lost his left hand, having been a soldier in his youth.

"You will allow me to remark," he replies politely, "that the offence, gentlemen, is not mine. I am but employed by another in this matter, and——."

"Down with the collector! To prison with the collector!" shouts the mob in the courtyard.

The magistrate and the notary-public exchange glances.

"You hear what our good townsfolk say, Señor?" growls the magistrate. "I must detain you for the present."

"How! Imprison me?" cries the envoy, flushing up with rage, and clapping his hand to his sword. "This is villainous injustice!"

"It is the law," retorts the magistrate; and here-with he signs the paper of committal, and the collector is marched off to prison between four alguazils, amid the shouts and hisses of the whole enraged population of Argamasilla.

And this same collector is Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra.

Yet a few days more, and he is formally committed to the gaol for such period as may seem just and fitting to the authorities pending certain legal proceedings between the burghers of Argamasilla and

the Grand Prior of the order of St. Juan. Such a dreary little gaol as it is too ! And such a comfortless room, if one could but peep into it ! The walls are whitewashed ; the floor is of bare stone ; the window is high, narrow, and closely barred with iron stanchions ; a truckle-bed occupies one corner ; a wooden chair and a plain deal table stand in the middle of the room where the light falls strongest ; and a gentleman paces wearily to and fro, to and fro, between the barred window and the bolted door, like a lion in a cage.

“ Oh, Fortune ! Fortune ! ” mutters he, “ what an ill-natured hag thou hast been to me ! Were not five years of an Algerine prison enough for me, but thou must needs pen me up in this sordid den, at the pleasure of some score or two of illiterate La Manchian boors, whose wits are as barren as their pasture lands ? Confound the Grand Prior of St. Juan, and his tithes, and his commission, and the whole province of La Mancha to boot ! Now the spirit of prose and dullness light on me for evermore, if, once out of this dungeon, I again put my neck under the yoke ! Farewell to tax, tithe, and revenue collecting ! Farewell to all manner of account-keeping, and clerkship, and office drudgery ! Pegasus never yet prospered in the plough, and Miguel Cervantes was a fool to believe it ! ”

Thus talking to himself, he slackens his pace, falls

into thought, stands motionless with folded arms, and presently sits down on the side of his bed, pondering and silent. An hour goes by, and still he neither looks up nor rises. The town clocks strike two in the afternoon ; and the gaoler, entering noisily, sets down the prisoner's dinner, and vanishes. Another hour goes by, and the gaoler, returning for the empty dishes, finds the prisoner still in the same place and the same attitude, and the food untouched upon the table.

"How now, hast no stomach for thy meat to-day, Señor?" says he, roughly.

Cervantes starts—looks up—passes his hand over his brow, like a man waking from sleep, and bursts into a hearty laugh.

"By Saint Jago, friend," he replies, "I had forgotten the olla, and my appetite too ; but now that you remind me of it, I am as hungry as a soldier on the march. See, now—wilt do me a kindness this afternoon?"—"Ay, if I may, Señor."

"Then take this crown-piece, and go buy me half-a-dozen quires of paper, a bundle of quills, and a bottle of ink, while I clear out the dishes ; and take the change to drink my health with at your leisure."

The gaoler nodded, vanished again, and re-appeared with the purchases just as the prisoner had finished his dinner.

And that very afternoon (would we knew the date of it, that we might keep it for a holiday all the years of our life !)—that very afternoon, as the golden sunlight poured in like a fiery shaft through the prison window, casting sharp shadows of barred iron on the floor and table below, our friend and hero tore off his first half-sheet of paper, carefully mended his quill, scrawled a big number 1 at the right-hand corner of the page, and wrote, in his own free careless writing, the following memorable words :—

THE
LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS
OF
DON QUIXOTE DE LA MANCHA.

PART I. BOOK I.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.—Which treats of the quality and manner of living of the renowned Don Quixote de la Mancha.

Having got so far, he then went on to tell how this same Don Quixote possessed a lance, a buckler, a lean horse, and a coursing greyhound ; and how he lived chiefly on soup and cold mutton, ate lentils on Fridays, and feasted on Sundays upon a pigeon extraordinary. Writing thus, he smiled to himself from time to time ;

paused now and then to think ; and so went on, and on, till the sunlight faded off the floor, and travelled up the wall, and finally died away altogether into grey twilight. The darkness came too soon that evening, and he put away his papers with a sigh ; but he had finished the first chapter, for all that, and, when he went to bed, lay awake for hours in the moonlight, thinking of the chapters that were to come.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“Puesto ya el pie en el estribo.”

WE are not going to describe “Don Quixote,” or analyze it, or criticise it, or do more, indeed, than relate the circumstances under which it was written and published, and advise all those who have not yet read it to procure themselves that pleasure with the least possible delay. For it is one of the great books of the world, and was, unquestionably, the grand event of all Cervantes’ life. It may be doubted whether he had himself any idea of this fact when he began that memorable first chapter in the dreary little prison at Argamasilla. He most probably preferred his tragedies, or his “Galatea ;” little suspecting that the new story was destined to be, not only his *chef-d’œuvre*, but the *chef-d’œuvre* of Spanish literature for evermore.

The beginning of “Don Quixote,” as we have last related, was written in prison ; but we have no means of ascertaining how far the story had progressed before the author obtained his liberty, nor how long his imprisonment lasted. The history of

Cervantes becomes, indeed, extremely vague about this time—as vague as would that of any private individual who lived quietly at home, was too poor to go into society, and took no pains to flatter the great, or conciliate his contemporaries. It appears, however, that he was residing in 1604 at Valladolid, and applied on the 26th of September in that year for the royal license to print and publish the first part of "Don Quixote." The book appeared, accordingly, early in 1605, with a dedication to the duke of Bejar—a nobleman of fine taste, a patron of the arts, and a descendant of the illustrious house of Navarre. The public, it is said, appeared at first neither to understand nor appreciate "Don Quixote." The learned, believing it to be a mere romance of chivalry, passed it by unopened; while the ignorant, hoping to find in it a budget of marvels and fairy tales, and incapable of comprehending its exquisite humour, threw it aside in disgust, and attributed to it the dulness which was all their own. Thus, except by a limited few, the book continued unread, and the bookseller's stock undiminished. Determined, at any risk, to rouse the public attention, and procure, at least, a hearing, Cervantes hit at last upon a somewhat novel expedient. He wrote an anonymous critique upon his own production, asserting that "Don Quixote"

had not yet been understood by the Spanish public ; drawing attention to the fact that it "abounded in instruction and entertainment ;" and proving that it was written "in the spirit of satire, and composed with the laudable design of banishing the pernicious reading of books of chivalry." This little scheme succeeded beyond his expectations. The book became suddenly popular. No less than four editions were brought out before the close of the first year, and we have the authority of Cervantes himself for the fact that thirty thousand copies had already been sold before the close of the year 1615. Since that time, "Don Quixote" has become naturalized throughout Europe. The English have eleven translations ; the French have ten, one of which, alone, has gone through more than fifty editions ; the Germans have two ; an Italian version was published in Venice during the life of Cervantes ; and Portugal, Holland, and Belgium have each their own adaptation. Of the original Spanish, there were published between the years 1605 and 1814, eight editions of the first part, five of the second part, and forty-eight of the complete work ; since which, many others have appeared in England, Germany, and France. Nor was this all. So early as 1617, one Francisco de Avila, a native of Madrid, brought out a dramatic interlude of "The

Invincible Deeds of Don Quixote de la Mancha ;" in 1637 a comedy called "Don Quixote" was represented before Philip IV. and his queen ; the French have seven plays taken from the same source ; and a pastoral drama called "The Wedding of Camacho," founded on an episode in the second part of "Don Quixote," formed, until very lately, one of the stock pieces of the English theatre. Of imitators, commentators, editors, and critics who have devoted themselves to the elucidation of this one book, there is, literally, no end. We have a "Don Quixote in Verse," by Ward ; a "Modern Don Quixote ;" a "Spiritual Quixote ;" a "Don Quixote in Paris ;" a "Quixote of Castile," and above all, the "Hudibras" of Samuel Butler, which, though confessedly an imitation in general outline, is a poem of such rare merit and admirable wit, that it has been said to place its author "the nearest upon an equality with his admirable original."

So signal and unprecedented a success as this which began to be achieved by "Don Quixote" even within the first year of its publication, could not fail to arouse the envy and enmity of a swarm of petty authorlings. All the writers of chivalrous romances, all the dramatists, all the sonneteers and poetasters were up in arms. Some attacked Cervantes in

anonymous verses ; some openly, in acrimonious prose ; while the followers and admirers of Lope de Vega, who had just begun to usurp the dominion of the stage, engaged in the contest with even more than the ordinary virulence of party-spirit. In the mean time, Cervantes was residing at Valladolid, whither the court had temporarily removed ; and there, weary of the persecutions of rivals, disappointed in his hopes of advancement, and still earning a precarious livelihood as an estate-agent and collector of rents, he lived in strict retirement, "seeking refuge," as he himself expresses it, "once more in his ancient leisure," and devoting that leisure to study, to literature, and to works of piety and benevolence. His family, at this time, consisted of his wife, one daughter, his sister Andrea, who was now a widow, her daughter, and a female cousin, named Magdalena, who was a sister of charity.

In 1606, the court returned to Madrid, whither Cervantes followed it ; possibly for the purpose of continuing near his employers, or possibly for the sake of residing in the neighbourhood of Alcala de Henares, where his relations were established. In this city he is recorded to have lived in a house at the back of the college of Notre Dame de Loretto, where, in 1608, he revised and re-edited the sixth

edition of the first part of "Don Quixote," carefully correcting it throughout, and adding several important passages as he went on. Hence the sixth edition of the first part is held to be the most authentic, and has been the received text for all subsequent editions. In 1610, he is known to have removed to house number nine in the street of Leon ; about which time he became a member of a religious association, called the Oratory of Olivaro of Canizares. To this society the king of Spain, the duke of Lerma, and many distinguished nobles, councillors, and men of letters were affiliated, between the years 1609 and 1611, after which, in consequence, it is supposed, of the discredit brought upon it by some of the younger members, the association was summarily dissolved. Somewhat later, according to Roscoe, both Cervantes and Lope de Vega enrolled themselves in another benevolent brotherhood, called the Oratory of the Caballero de Gracia, whilst Donna Catalina and Donna Andrea attached themselves to a similar community, under the protection of the ancient order of St. Francisco.

Thus, in good works, in the fulfilment of his home duties, and in that round of daily cares and toils from which he was destined to know no rest, Miguel de Cervantes passed onward into the decline of life. He

was now more than sixty years of age. The curling auburn hair and golden beard were silvered by time ; the athletic form had lost its military uprightness ; and the tread, once so elastic, had become lame and feeble. His mother, his brother Rodrigo, and his younger sister were all no more. Manuel, the friend of his youth, the companion of his soldier-life, was long since dead—having fallen a victim to malignant fever while serving with his regiment in Mexico. The world, in short, was sadly changed for Cervantes ; and even the honest satisfaction which his literary successes must have afforded him was too largely alloyed by the neglect and enmity of his contemporaries. Time, however, which bereft him of so much and disappointed him so heavily, had no power to subdue his dauntless spirit, or impair the sweetness of his disposition. No man ever met poverty more cheerfully, drudgery more manfully, or abuse with a gayer scorn of those from whose lips it proceeded. Fostered, as it were, by the perpetual sunshine of his temper, his genius seemed to develop and his judgment to ripen with every succeeding year. The very flavour of his wit grew more keen and delicate with age, like that of a generous old wine ; and as his imagination continued to supply him with an inexhaustible bounty of material, so his

style seemed perpetually to be gaining in vigour, polish, and brilliancy.

In the course of the year 1612, Cervantes, who was still residing in Madrid, completed a series of twelve tales, which he dedicated to the count of Lemos; a nobleman whose high poetical and diplomatic attainments, and whose munificence as a patron of the arts, caused him at that time to be regarded as the Mæcenæ of Spain. To these tales, which were especially written with a view to combining instruction with amusement and conveying a moral lesson to society, Cervantes gave the name of "Exemplars," or "Exemplary Novels." They were much admired by his contemporaries, who repeatedly imitated and dramatized them, with indifferent success.

His next undertaking was to begin the second part of "Don Quixote." "It is clear," says Monsieur Viardot, in his notice of the "Life and Writings of Cervantes," "that the author did not originally propose to extend the work any further. It was customary at that time not to complete such productions of the imagination.. An author finished his book, like Ariosto the cantos of his poem, in the very midst of the most complicated adventures, and in the most interesting part of the action." Fortunately, however, for the unity of "Don Quixote," and fortu-

nately, also, for the world, Cervantes conceived the happy determination of sending his hero forth upon another set of adventures, and continuing his career to its close. Having embarked in this project with unabated enthusiasm, Cervantes devoted himself to it with such ardour, that before the end of the year 1614 it was already advertised for speedy publication. It was now his darling work, and he laboured to make the second part surpass the first. He poured into it all the fruits of his experience—all the wealth of his imagination. He touched and retouched it, as a painter might finish up a favourite picture, or a sculptor linger over the delicate surface of his "stone ideal." "It was," says Roscoe, "the casket which Cervantes delighted to store with all his most ingenious thoughts;" to which happy remark he elsewhere adds that, "no work, in any language, ever exhibited a more delicate or a more lively satire, combined with a richer vein of invention, and wrought with happier success." Before he could finish it, however, and while all Spain was eagerly looking forward to its appearance in type, some base and unknown writer, who called himself Alonzo Fernando de Avelaneda, had the audacity to bring out a spurious second part or continuation to "Don Quixote," which was not only a wretched production in respect of

literary merit, but was also a mere vehicle for every kind of personal libel upon Cervantes himself. Amazed and justly indignant as he was, this great and good man forbore to prosecute his enemy according to the law, or even to betray his real name to the public. He contented himself, instead, with exposing the defects of his style, holding up his ignorance and malignity to everlasting ridicule, and setting him up, in the remaining chapters of "Don Quixote," as in a pillory, for the scorn of all future generations. This affair seemed, also, to act as an additional stimulant to the active genius of Cervantes, since we find that he had concluded his work by the beginning of the new year (1615), and was already soliciting the necessary license for printing it. So anxious was he, however, to correct and polish it to the last degree of excellence, that it did not appear till near the end of October in that year. In the meantime, he had, in his intervals of leisure, written and published a poem, called "The Voyage to Parnassus;" and, in the summer of 1615, before the second part of "Don Quixote" had yet reached the public, he brought out a volume of comedies and dramatic interludes, dedicated to his friend and patron, the count of Lemos. This collection was coldly received by the public, and none of the pieces were adopted in the theatres; but

the count of Lemos, not long after, conferred a small pension upon the author, who now stood more than ever in need of pecuniary assistance.

For age, alas! was gaining upon Miguel Cervantes, and his health was failing fast. Towards the close of the year 1615, and in the early spring of 1616, his malady declared itself to be an incurable dropsy, and he was for some weeks confined to the house. Even then, though frequently incapacitated by pain and debility, he was engaged upon a new romance, upon which he laboured from time to time, with a mind still radiant and unclouded, and an invention as playful, as varied, and as fertile as ever. This work was called "*Persiles and Sigismunda*," and was composed, according to Roscoe, "with as much fire, vigour, and brilliancy of imagination, as any in the most florid years of his youth." As the spring progressed, and the book was undergoing its last corrections, Cervantes removed for a few weeks to Esquivias—seeking rest and change of air. Here, an old and dying man, he revisited the scenes of his youth; and, feebly pacing the moss-grown paths of the garden which once belonged to Don Salazar, went back in thought to those sweet evening hours when, thirty-two years before, he lingered in the shade of the poplars with her whose love had never failed, and without

whose dear companionship his life would have been poor indeed.

He had not been many days, however, in Esquivias before he grew rapidly worse, and felt that he had but a short time before him. To die at home, under his own humble roof, and in the arms of his wife and daughter, became now his only desire; and he hastened back to Madrid, attended by a couple of friends, and mounted, strangely enough, upon a horse, which he himself describes as "somewhat mettlesome." This brief journey was infinitely painful to the invalid. His circulation was alternately torpid and accelerated; he was tormented with a raging thirst; and his strength scarcely sufficed to keep him in his saddle. In this melancholy state, he reached home on the 14th of April. On the 15th, during a brief interval of comparative ease, he sat up and wrote a preface for his yet unpublished romance of "Persiles and Sigismunda."

"My life," he says, in this preface, "is drawing to a close, and I find, by the daily journal of my pulse, that it will have finished its course by next Sunday at the latest. Adieu to gaiety—adieu to humour—adieu, my pleasant friends! I must now die, and I wish for nothing better than speedily to see you—well contented in another world."

On Sunday, the 17th of April, his life, as he had predicted, seemed to be ebbing fast. He took leave of his friends in the morning, and prepared with calmness for that awful moment which no man can contemplate with indifference. But his presentiment, after all, proved fallacious. Towards evening he rallied, and, divided between his human affections and his religious aspirations, wavered awhile between hope and resignation. This uncertainty was not destined, however, to be of long duration. On the Monday he relapsed, and his disease made, within a few hours, such alarming progress that hope became no longer reasonable, and the last sacraments of the Roman Catholic church were administered. Still he lingered—still he suffered—still waited for death, and found no release from pain. Even in this extremity, his mind remained serene and unclouded as a summer sky when the sun is going down. Too feeble to hold a pen, he dictated his will; gave directions for his interment in the cemetery of the Trinitarian convent, where his daughter had not long since taken the veil; and dedicated his last work to his benefactor, the count of Lemos.

“Your excellency may remember,” says he, in this affecting fragment, the last of which he was the author, “an ancient couplet commencing ‘*Puesto ya*

*el pie en el estribo,** and I may commence in the same words; for I may truly say that, with my foot already in the stirrup, and even now experiencing the anguish of death, I address this letter to you. Yesterday I received Extreme Unction. To-day I am writing this. My time is short; my pains increase; my hopes vanish; yet do I greatly desire that my life might be prolonged till the return of your excellency to your native country. But, as Heaven has decreed otherwise, we must bow to its will, and all that remains will be to acquaint your excellency with the deep sentiments of affection towards you which I bear with me to my grave."

The count of Lemos was at this moment returning home from an Italian tour, and expected daily in Madrid. When he arrived, Cervantes was no more. He died on Saturday, the 23rd of April, 1616, aged sixty-seven years—five days after the Extreme Unction had been administered to him, and four days after he had composed this dedication. Of his last moments we have no record; and were it not for his own preface to "*Persiles and Sigismunda*," we should never even have known the disease by which he died. Since then, the very spot in which his bones are now resting

* "*With foot already in the stirrup.*"

has been forgotten, and the only authentic portraits of him which were known to exist, and for which he sat to Yauregni and Pacheco, have disappeared. Thus the great men of this world pass away like shadows, and leave only their labours to mark the period of their sojourn. Thus a broken statue stands to us for Phidias ; a poem, for Homer ; "Don Quixote," for Cervantes. They lived ; they died ; and their works form, after all, their truest biographies and their noblest monuments.

The wife of Cervantes survived him for ten years, and died on the 31st of October, 1626. Of his daughter we know no more than that she became a nun, and bore the name of Isabel.

The story of Miguel Cervantes is told. It is the story of a great and good man ; of one who, in all the relations and obligations of an eventful life, was uniformly true to himself and his fellow men ; who was a true soldier, a true patriot, a true friend, a true poet, a true gentleman, and a true Christian. The language of panegyric can add nothing to facts like these. They speak for themselves—as the record of his life speaks for him—and need no commentator.

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